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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, Esq.

INCLUDING

A HISTORY OF THE STAGE,

FROM THE TIME OF GARRICK TO THE PRESENT PERIOD.

By JAMES BOADEN, Esq.

" Nihil metûs in vultu: gratia oris supererat.
" Bonum virum facilè crederes, magnum libenter."
Tacit. *in v. Agric.*

" This was the *noblest* Roman of them all!" Shaksp.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

LIFE

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, Esq.

BOOK THE SECOND — CONTINUED.

CHAPTER III.

SEASON OF 1789-90. — MRS. SIDDONS ABSENT. — MR. KEMBLE'S RESOURCES. — COVENT GARDEN. — THE AUTHOR'S FRIEND, HARLEY. — HIS TALENTS. — KEMBLE IN HENRY V. — THE TEMPEST. — PURCEL'S MUSIC. — VANBRUGH'S FALSE FRIEND. — MR. KEMBLE IN THE LIBERTINE. — THE IRON MASQUE. — KING AT COVENT GARDEN. — THE CRUSADE. — THE HAUNTED TOWER. — MRS. BEHN'S ROVER. — QUICK IN RICHARD. — SUMMER THEATRE. — PALMER'S RETURN. — WINTER SEASON OF 1790-1. — DUKE OF CUMBERLAND'S DEATH. — DISINTERMENT OF THE SUPPOSED REMAINS OF THE GREAT MILTON. — ENQUIRY INTO THE FACT. — MR. KEMBLE'S CONVICTION ON THAT SUBJECT.

Mr. Kemble experienced, as a manager, some difficulty during the season of 1789-90. Mrs. Siddons had suffered in her health by the severe continuance of her professional duties; and she resolved

to avail herself at length of a variety of invitations, which tempted her in a series, that brought her to the beautiful scenery of Devonshire. The tragedies of female interest were therefore either to be weakened by inferior representation, or for a time laid aside. The latter was the safer course. But the inexhaustible stores of Shakspeare presented to Mr. Kemble a highly tempting monodram, in the play of King Henry V.; and he thought, how justly we shall shortly see, that the conqueror of Agincourt fell more completely within the range of his powers, than the characters of John or Richard III.; for reasons as much mental as personal—the pleasantry which so agreeably in Kemble relieved his severer habits, and the heroic perfection of his countenance and his figure. He therefore set himself seriously to prepare the play for representation. Now this, in Mr. Kemble's notion of the business, was, not to order the prompter to write out the parts from some old mutilated prompt copy lingering on his shelves; but himself to consider it attentively in the author's genuine book: then to examine what corrections could be properly admitted into his text; and, finally, what could be cut out in the representation, not as disputing the judgment of the author, but as suiting the time of the representation to the habits of his audience, or a little favouring the powers of his actors, in order that the performance might be as uniformly good as it was practicable to make it. The stage arrange-

ments throughout the play were all distinctly marked by him in his own clear exact penmanship, and when he had done his work, his theatre received, in that perfected copy, a principle of exactness, which was of itself sufficient to keep its stage unrivalled for truth of scenic exhibition.

Another play that he prepared, and rendered prodigiously attractive, was the Tempest, admitting in a temperate way some of the additions of D'Avenant and Dryden. These rendered it fuller as a stage spectacle, and secured the assistance of Miss Farren in Dorinda, and Mrs. Goodall in Hippolyto. It gave a terrible dance of Furies in one place, and a masque of Neptune and Amphitrite in another; and a beautiful accession indeed in the occasional Epilogue, written by the elegant Burgoyne, and spoken by Miss Farren. After laughing at the *present* monsters of the Isle—the HE Miss Milliners, and the *stringed* and *cravatted* Exquisites, he comes to objects worthy of a people's gaze, and thus alludes to his present Majesty, when Prince of Wales:—

> "High o'er the crowd, inform'd with patriot fire,
> Pure as the virtues that endear his sire,
> See one who leads — as mutual trials prove —
> A band of brothers to a people's love:
> One, who on station scorns to found controul,
> But gains pre-eminence by worth of soul.
> These are the honours that, on reason's plan,
> Adorn the Prince, and vindicate the man;
> While gayer passions, warmed at Nature's breast,
> Play o'er his youth — the feathers of his crest."

Acquainted by age with the points of this allusion, I add with sincere pleasure, that no compliment, that experience presents to my memory, ever surpassed the above in propriety, and none ever approached it in delicacy and beauty. I would offer the last couplet triumphantly, as an attestation to the refined genius of Burgoyne. The mixed tone of tenderness, airiness and respect, with which Miss Farren delivered the last line, can never be forgotten —

" *Play* o'er his YOUTH — the *feathers* of his crest."

Having thus noticed what Mr. Kemble had prepared, to supply at all events the means of battle, though his great ally had not joined him,—I pass over to the other theatre to remark upon the first appearance of my early friend, Harley; who came up with great distinction from Norwich to supply in part, if possible, the loss of Henderson. Harley had been bred to business in the banking-house of Lefevre, Currie and Co., in Cornhill. He was distinguished even there for quickness and accuracy; he played with what others would have called toil; and not in the least clashing with his duty, he found leisure to enlarge his mind; to read the best authors with much discrimination; and to bind about him some few friends, who cultivated poetry without ostentation, and imparted their pleasures and their difficulties to each other. It may be supposed that a stage adorned by the peculiar powers of Henderson, would be attended by Harley with avidity;

perhaps he a little resembled him, and such resemblance is usually decisive as to the choice of a model. There was nothing about him that could at all lead his hopes into the school of Kemble.

To Henderson he had no introduction whatever, but a letter written with so much modesty and talent, that it procured for him the zealous friendship of that great and good man. He enquired into his studies; heard him recite; seemed at once to discover that he had formed an able pupil unknown to himself; and at length perceiving that the bent of his mind was decidedly theatrical, he only then thought of the best means of preparing him, prudently, for his own profession. He recommended him to fence regularly with Angelo, and he extended his steps rather beyond the common limits of dancing. Mr. Kemble, though a graceful figure, learned his perfect stage deportment under Le Picq. Henderson made him known, as a young man whom he esteemed, to Cumberland and to Hayley, to Mr. Whiteford and Mr. Steevens; and Harley knew how to profit by such minds, and become agreeable to such men.

At length the young actor announced to Lefevre's people his determination as to the stage; the resident partner heard him recite some scenes of Richard; saw, as every body else did, the decided talent of his cashier, and assured him of his friendly aid upon all occasions. At length the trial was made at Norwich, and completely succeeded. He

wrote to me the particulars of his debût, and of his first alarm upon encountering Murray in Richmond; who, with the usual condescension of a veteran, took his chance of overthrowing him by a charming exterior elegantly attired; or of gracing himself by promoting the success of the young candidate.

When Harley appeared at Covent Garden, a similar fate awaited him. The elegant George Holman condescended to *fence* with him in Richmond; and the public were paragraphed by Topham into the knowledge, that though Mr. Holman had obtained possession of Richard, even during the life-time of Henderson, his zeal for the profession led him to act the part of Richmond to Mr. Harley. The *World* abounded with little discrediting half lines to his prejudice; sometimes pretending a veneration for Garrick, as if it were some odd impeachment of a man's modesty, to act a character which that mighty creature had sustained; at others, he resembled Henderson so much, that it might be true, as had been reported, that he was really his son; some resemblances, moreover, they discovered between him and Mr. Kemble, but these were unattended by any scandal whatever, for two human beings in person, gesture, and utterance, could not be more decidedly unlike. All these tricks, at the bottom, meant nothing more, than that he was really formidable to the *wear and tear* tribe of unthinking actors; and he was decidedly

a favourite with the town, in Richard and Iago, in Shylock, and even in Lear. A reverend critic of that day, independent of his colleague's opinion, enumerated some of Harley's felicitous points in dialogue, and firmly added, "If he can continue "to do this, he is an actor." Substantially, no doubt, the style of Harley was that of Henderson, and it is a disadvantage to an actor, to remind the spectator of another; besides, he never attained to the mellowness of his master in tragedy — his voice was harsher and less flexible. Another misfortune attended him, that he never could lay claim to any of the rich comedy of Henderson. But he was a man of sterling sense, and an actor of great energy; and, as what was imitative in him dropt off, he remained, on his own stock, the paragon representative of rough honesty and unshaken principle. Of Smith and Holman in tragedy, I should say, that I think they never got beyond Chamont; a hot, high, honourable soldier. Of Harley, that he stopt somewhere about Kent in Lear, and all those parts, in tragedy or comedy, "which trace him in the "line" of unsophisticated principles and purposes never to be shaken. The reader sees, that by this manner of expressing myself, I do not design to object to their higher efforts; but that I think their real excellence did not reach beyond the characters by which I measure it.

On the 1st of October, Mr. Kemble acted the part of Henry V. The play had not been done

for 20 years. This stage indifference to the record of our brightest period may, perhaps, be accounted for on a ground by no means political. It may be presumed, that the mob always like to be told, that Englishmen, extenuated by disease, and in numbers as one compared with ten, are yet sure to become the conquerors of France. But there is so little *female* interest in the drama, that we cannot wonder at the coldness of our fair countrywomen to these fighting plays. Fair Catharine of France, and her broken English, or equally indifferent French, is not likely to attract the polished females of modern times. As far as Mr. Kemble was concerned, I do not think that even his Coriolanus exceeded his "royal HAL." As a *coup de Theatre*, his starting up from prayer at the sound of the trumpet, in the passage where he states his attempted atonement to Richard the Second, formed one of the most spirited excitements that the stage has ever displayed. His occasional reversions to the "mad wag," the "sweet young prince," had a singular charm, as the condescension of one who could be so terrible. Of the other performers, James Aickin and Baddeley claim a distinguished praise, in which they share, humbly, with Kemble, that is, as Exeter, and Fluellen, being unapproachable, for tenderness and humour.

On the 13th of October, he brought out his revision of the Tempest, of which I have already spoken. I have, I hope, sufficiently guarded myself

against any presumed admiration of this production. The scenes of Hippolyto and Dorinda are very prettily written in that loose play of fancy, which Dryden mistook for nature. He usually combines in such dialogue an affected inexperience of life with a highly metaphysical intellect; and he passes indecency not seldom through the lips of enquiring chastity. All this was, no doubt, enchanting among the voluptuaries of Charles's court. In addition to the *unearthly* music of PURCEL, in this opera, the flowing melodies of Arne and the judicious accompaniments of Linley, filled the "Isle with noises" more appropriate than even the music of Macbeth. When the young student, in that charming science, has mazed himself in the difficult execution of foreign composers, let him meditate the *symphony* to the air

"Full fathom five thy father lies,"

and try himself to sing the air, with all its genuine expression; and he will then know, that he has a language yet to learn, and no master to assist him, grounded essentially in our common nature, but only well spoken by beings of the most refined sensibility.

Mr. Kemble also made a few changes in the *False Friend* of Vanbrugh, and acted the principal character himself. It has so long been dismissed to those dramatic shades called libraries, that a few words may be proper as a sketch of its interest.

Don John is one of those Spanish libertines, whom no considerations can disturb in their unhallowed pursuits. After violating every tie in life, they usually leave it by the stiletto they have provoked, or one destined to the bosom of another. The latter is the fate, which Vanbrugh doomed for the hero of the present *comedy*. Mr. Kemble tried to reform and save him; but to repent of villainy could not be possible in Don John; and the character died, though he saved the man.

It may be proper, on this occasion, to express some surprise, that Mr. Kemble should ever have conceived himself a fit representative of such characters. He never looked in the least like Don Giovanni. He had none of the high sanguine temperament, none of the careless hurry and audacious impudence of the fighting lover of the whole sex. His looks belied his tongue; and what might be credited, coming from Palmer, seemed morally impossible when uttered by Kemble. Don John begins his day usually in beating his valet, who is his master in both policy and wit; he then commences his more serious business of deceiving every living being, young or old, who may meet him; and passes his nights in lurking under verandas, or stealing into chambers, ruining reputations or destroying peace of mind, inflicting dishonour or death, or both, as he was provoked. Let us consider this in the unbending stateliness of Kemble's deportment, and the grave, prudent steadiness of

his physiognomy. To use the title of one of his alterations, "O, it's impossible!" — and to this revival, there could be no conceivable temptation, but his thinking the character one suited to his powers, for there is nothing else in the play, that could be attractive, unless from the personal beauty of the actress.

The French Revolution had now opened upon the world in all its horrors; and the stage, "which "echoes but the public voice," was now destined to rave about that cage of tyranny, the bastile, which, like Newgate in the year 1780, had been besieged by a virtuous populace, and all its dark secrets returned to the light of day and the blessings of freedom. The Hon. J. St. John, proud of his achievement, Mary Queen of Scots, and the people of Drury, as Skeffington used to say, "wanting him "to *do* something for them," he did the romantic incident, called, perhaps with more propriety than is suspected, "VOLTAIRE'S *Masque de fer*," or Man in the Iron Masque; whom, supposing him to have actually existed, Gibbon triumphantly proves to have been a *slip* of Anne of Austria; and consequently a brother of Louis the Fourteenth; and who, when her husband's imbecility no longer could father her offspring, might have, by strength of resemblance, thrown into question the reigning branch of the House of Bourbon.

Kelly acted the Iron Mask, and the entertainment really possessed considerable interest. Allusions to what was passing in France were plentiful,

and one as to the dissolution of nunneries was loudly applauded by such as knew nothing but the abuses of such institutions. It should be remembered, that under the eye of one of the most gentle and forbearing of kings, the wretched Chenier's tragedy of Charles the Ninth was acting with the most furious applause every night; and the Parisians were instructed that "the operation of time "would teach the grandeur of the State* to succeed "to that of the Throne. The people resuming "their splendor, and overthrowing the imposture "of ancient prejudices, would reclaim their rights "founded by NATURE. Their bliss, springing from "the very bosom of their miseries, would lead them "to destroy all those horrid Bastiles, bathed so "long with tears of blood; and acknowledging "their leaders, then no more their masters, they "would be happy under a monarch, the friend of "equity, and restorer together of liberty and the "laws." And thus having rendered the very name of monarch odious, they flattered him out of all possibility of resistance, and finally sent him and his family to expire as traitors under the tranchant of the Guillotine.

Mr. King had, in November, agreed to act a few nights at Covent Garden Theatre, and on the 20th, he played Touchstone, in As You Like It.

* The old expedient. See Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel.

"Thought they might ruin him they could create,
Or *melt* him to that GOLDEN CALF — a *State*."

But the style of this fine actor was at an immense distance from any thing about him, and he seemed, like the poor stag, one

"Left and abandoned of his *velvet* friends."

The Dramatist had been running on at that theatre, with a success never equalled in my remembrance; and the author, not finding on the sudden, a second subject for comedy, equal to his first, had gone to work upon a shewy piece, to be called the Crusade, in which, by making a knight of Edwin, and what he could not well avoid doing, a beauty of Mrs. Billington, with music and scenery, that were in course to cost *him* nothing, he hoped to retain his influence with the town, or what he always valued more, his interest with the manager.

On the 24th of November, Mr. Cobb produced his opera of the Haunted Tower. Time has a little changed our taste in music; but, long after the year 1789, the music which Stephen Storace compiled and composed on this occasion, was heard with unabated delight. The composers of that time cultivated a pure and flowing melody like Paesiello; they had nothing of the flight, hurry, and almost excessive brilliancy of Rossini — the language with them still stood for something, however little. There was a business in this opera just enough to carry the singers into their places on the stage; nothing that merited the important term of

a fable. But there was great ability in the cast; for with Kelly, Baddeley, Moody, Suett, Dignum, Sedgwick, and young Bannister among the men, were Mrs. Crouch, Romanzini (poor Mrs. Bland), and Storace for the fairer part of the performance; and they were all distinguished for talent of superior kind, and execution in the fullest contrast to each other.

Storace was certainly one of the most effective burletta singers in the world. She took business as a pleasure, and seemed always happy while employed. In the discharge of her public duty she was highly exemplary; laughed at colds and nervous complaints; used her shoes in the dry, and her pattens in the wet, to convey her to and from the theatre, and had not a grain of affectation about her. Nor have I yet done with the display of Kemble's activity in the present season; he made a very attractive comedy out of Mrs. Behn's Rover, which was beautifully acted; and just before the close, my most respected friend, Mr. Prince Hoare, gave to the stage a musical farce, called No Song No Supper, which must be delightful as long as there is any thing like the whim of Bannister, Suet, or Storace, in the successive ornaments of the stage. Mr. Kemble thus terminated a very successful season, with little outlay of money; fertile of attraction, in the absence of the greatest attraction of all; and proved his management to be at least equal to his acting.

A circumstance at the other theatre this season realized a pleasantry a few years back. Henderson one morning rehearsed his Richard the Third in the manner of little Quick, and the company was convulsed with laughter. Mr. Quick, no doubt, was aware that in "every man's thought" the performance of Richard by him would be deemed a most *ludicrous* achievement; but he fancied it would bring him a fine benefit night, and he tried it. He had, however, much too high a veneration for Shakspeare to play it otherwise than seriously; so that all he had to struggle with were some tones inveterately comic, and the associations of himself with comedy by the audience; and these came sometimes into their minds uncalled by any lapse into usual attitude or whimsical utterance.

I have already noticed the preparation of the Crusade. It was by some strange management brought out in the run of the benefits, so that if it hit strongly, it could proceed only at intervals, and at most could be but a turn over to the following season. The burlesque chivalry of Edwin did not prove captivating, and the author considered the production as rather weakly. The florid poets of the time assisted him in the songs; but the truth is, that Reynolds, although occasionally highly successful in the play with spectacle and music, is never there more than half himself: in fair broad comedy he luxuriates. The serious dialogue of his dramas always wants strength and poetry.

The summer theatre offered a few pleasing features. Palmer, a little recovering from his Royalty embarrassments, returned to Colman's, where he was invaluable — and Parsons, too, who had some odd mode of consulting his health, without forsaking his favourite usquebaugh, appeared there for the benefit of Mrs. Bannister, in Dr. Bartholo. Bannister, on his own night, wisely devolved the character of Gondibert on Palmer, and became himself a very excellent Gregory Gubbins through the long continuance of the Battle of Hastings.

The winter season of 1790-1 had scarcely commenced when the theatres were closed by the death of the late King's brother, the Duke of Cumberland. His Royal Highness was born on the 7th November 1745; in 1771 had married the widow Horton, sister of Earl Carhampton, and this match, while it excited some very unpleasant opposition to him in his family, became a source also of savage persecution out of it. The use that was made of it by Junius, will never be forgotten. By *this* marriage his Royal Highness left no issue. Upon the subject of any *other*, reference may at any time be made to the Princess Olive of Cumberland, who will take every *suitable* pains to establish her title. The late Duke came much into public, was distinguished by great condescension, and good humour, loved music passionately, and passionately admired Mrs. Billington. You looked for his Royal Highness about the orchestra at the Opera, and seldom missed him.

He as seldom missed the trial of Warren Hastings, while his health permitted him to attend; and thus he passed his life innocently and happily; not indecently opposing the government of his sovereign and his brother; and lending neither his countenance nor his allowance to any faction in the state. He had lingered some time under the combined attacks of asthma and consumption — had passed from Windsor to the coast, and back again to Windsor, with little improvement; and an inveterate cancer in the throat and mouth terminated his existence on the 18th of September. In conversation his Royal Highness had the hurried manner of his family, and gave easy utterance to any gay levity that struck his fancy. These trifles were malignantly weighed with the occasions that produced them, and brought forward to impeach his understanding; but had they proceeded from a facetious judge, or, if the character be acknowledged, facetious father of the church, the mere expressions would have excited little surprise and not the slightest derision.

About this time an occurrence, which may, I hope, be termed singular, frighted the whole island from its propriety. I allude to the disinterment of a coffin in Cripplegate church, supposed to contain the body of the great author of the Paradise Lost. Milton, though without any theatrical purpose, has left his muse among the graces of the modern stage, by having written, for Ludlow Castle, his magnifi-

cent Masque of Comus. With the severe and truly Grecian tragedy of Agonistes our stage has never yet become acquainted. About the year 1741 a gentleman, of the name of Dixon, meditated its performance in public, and he had fallen upon some distribution of it into parts, which, in his own opinion at least, was calculated to produce a very powerful effect. Sincerely as I admire the poem in the closet, (and few offer more frequent splendors of diction to my memory,) I should be unwilling to display the hero upon our common stages: and should survey the attempt to do so, with an alarm that sacrilege was about to invade the mind as well as the person of the great bard. To the latter atrocity I am fortunately restricted, and a short account of it shall be laid before the reader.

The best things are so liable to perversion, that it will excite little surprise to learn that the profanation alluded to arose out of a design to do honour to the epic glory of our country. A monument had been intended to Milton in the church of Cripplegate; and this naturally enough begot a desire to ascertain, if practicable, the precise situation of his remains. Among the mouldering coffins of past generations tradition lends her feeble taper, in the memories of hereditary sextons and pew openers. The search was accordingly made under the immediate direction of Mr. Strong, a solicitor, and a man of science, and Mr. Cole, one of the churchwardens. On the 3d of August, word was

brought to these gentlemen, that the coffin of the poet was found; it was a leaden one, and reposed upon another of wood, conceived to contain the body of his father. They immediately repaired to the spot, and ordering water and a brush to be brought, they cautiously washed the surface, to ascertain whether any inscription was yet legible, to remove all doubt upon the subject. The coffin appeared to be old, much corroded, and without plate or inscription of any kind. Further these gentlemen did not think it proper to proceed. Fully satisfied as to the material fact, they retired; and leaving the sacred ashes undisturbed, ordered the ground to be closed. But the parish had the honour to possess at this time, for its overseers, a Mr. Laming, a pawnbroker, and a Mr. Fountain, a publican; and at a merry-making in the house of the latter, the subject being mentioned, they resolved, on the following day, to see all that it was possible for them to discover. They brought the coffin to the edge of the excavation, where the light fell upon it; cut it open with a chisel, both at the head and the foot, and had a distinct view of the body upon turning down the lead. It appeared to be perfect, completely enveloped in a shroud of many folds; the ribs standing up regularly. When they disturbed the shroud, the ribs in course fell. These miscreants made various attempts to extract the teeth, and one of them, the pawnbroker, had a mind to take the whole of the

lower jaw as a pledge; but probably from the failure of any present supply of his friend the publican's spirits, threw it back again into its place. From such guardians, the coffin passed into the custody of Mrs. Hoppey the sexton's servant, Elizabeth Grant, who discharged, I suppose by some male deputy, the functions of grave-digger in this well-conducted parish. Elizabeth Grant, by the aid of a light and in company with the workmen, exhibited the body to as many people as chose to look at it; and the teeth and the smaller bones and the hair were, at vile prices, sold to a great number of persons. A player of the name of Ellis had taken some hair and one of the ribs away in a piece of paper. As this person was an ingenious worker in hair, he meditated a larger purchase; but he was afterwards refused admittance. Mr. Neve published his succinct account of the transaction on the 24th of August, and entertained not the smallest doubt that the body so treated was that of Milton; he closes his narrative with this strong and terrible sentence: "The blood of the lamb is thus "dashed against the door posts of the perpetrators, "not to save, but to mark them to posterity."

There could be but one opinion as to the shameful usage of the body; but there were two as to the question, whether that body was or was not Milton's. Mr. Steevens, the commentator upon Shakspeare, distinguished himself, as usual, by the diligence of his enquiries, and the subtlety of his

inferences. He decided against Mr. Neve's opinion; and maintained that Milton had certainly escaped this profanation, on the following grounds:—

First—Because Milton was buried in the year 1674, and that this coffin was found in a situation *previously* assigned to the Smiths, a wealthy family, unconnected with his own. See their mural monument, dated 1653, immediately over the place of the supposed Milton's interment.

Secondly—Because the hair of Milton was decidedly of a light hue, and that of his pretended skull of the darkest brown, without any mixture of grey among it. Now Milton was 66 years old when he died, a period at which human locks are in a greater or less degree always interspersed with white.

Thirdly—Because the skull in question is remarkably flat and small, and with the lowest of all possible foreheads; whereas the head of Milton was large, and his brow conspicuously high.

Fourthly—Because the hands of Milton were full of chalk stones. Nothing of the kind was found in the hand of the substitute, though time does not destroy the trace, where the fingers are preserved; a fact ascertained upon a subject almost coeval with Milton.

Fifthly—Because from the smallness of the bones—the slight insertion, whiteness, evenness, and soundness of the teeth, it was most probably a female, one of the three Miss Smiths. The sex

could not absolutely be determined. If not a female, it might be the favourite son, John Smith, for whom an expensive receptacle had been ordered.

Sixthly — Because Milton was not in affluence — expired in an emaciated state — in a cold month, and his funeral was ordered by his widow. One of such expence was, therefore, little likely to come from a rapacious woman, who oppressed his children while he was living, and cheated them after he was dead.

Such are the strong points of Mr. Steevens's case. I will not weaken them by some, which prove nothing but the writer's pleasantry. His concluding reflections every reader would complain, if I omitted. I therefore insert them for two reasons: first, as expressing a right feeling upon the subject; and second, as presenting a lively portrait of the very peculiar mind of a gentleman, with whom I delighted to converse; and who, to antiquarian sagacity, united a pleasantry, that seemed eternally "mocking the meat he fed on."

"Thanks to fortune (says Mr. Steevens,) Mil-
"ton's corpse has hitherto been violated but by
"proxy! May his genuine reliques (if aught of
"him remains unmingled with common earth)
"continue to elude research, at least, while the
"present overseers of the poor of Cripplegate are
"in office! Hard, indeed, would have been the
"fate of the author of Paradise Lost, to have re-
"ceived shelter in a chancel, that a hundred and

" sixteen years after his interment his *domus ultima*
" might be ransacked by two of the lowest human
" beings, a retailer of spirituous liquors, and a man
" who lends sixpences to beggars, on such des-
" picable securities as tattered bed-gowns, cankered
" porridge-pots, and rusty gridirons. *Cape saxa*
" *manu, cape robora, Pastor!* But an ecclesias-
" tical court may yet have cognizance of this more
" than savage transaction. It will then be deter-
" mined whether our tombs are our own, or may
" be robbed with impunity by the little tyrants of
" a workhouse.

> " If charnel-houses, and our graves, must send
> Those that we bury back, our monuments
> Shall be the maws of kites."

After a careful consideration of the subject, the only reason for supposing this body to be the poet's is, that it was found exactly in the situation which tradition had assigned to it; I mean, under the clerk's desk, as it stood in Milton's time. Every thing else is against it. What, then, it may be said, became of the actual coffin of the great Republican? He was buried in the year 1674, and the church was repaired eight years after the interment. Let us recollect, that the year 1682 was a year of violent contest. The sectarists were assailed in their city fastnesses, and threatened with a court persecution, at least as violent as their own former persecution of the court. The citizens had to struggle

with a mayor, nominated, in fact, by the king, and who arbitrarily appointed their officers. Perhaps the elders of Cripplegate might apprehend some violation of the Poet's remains. What they had already seen in the case of the regicides, they might behold in the case of him, who certainly did not aid, but as certainly *did* justify all that they had done. Such an apprehension might change the situation of the coffin. If this be deemed a gratuitous and uncalled for supposition, it can only be so from the fair presumption, that a frame worn out by complicated disease was of easy decomposition; and that one hundred and sixteen years was a period adequate to the demolition of all but the *literary* remains of Milton.

Mr. Kemble took great trouble to inform himself upon the subject. Ellis the player showed to him the spoils he had brought away from the grave; and he went to Cripplegate, and I think he saw Mr. Neve, who had convinced *himself*, that the body so profaned was really Milton's. But on being shown the objections of Mr. Steevens, he said they were absolutely unanswerable; and he added, "Ill as the commentator has behaved to me, I al-"ways admired the force of his mind, and am "happy that he has exerted it, as I think, triumph-"antly, on the present occasion." We had long after this an opportunity of reviving the subject, when Bacon's most enchanting bust of Milton was put up in the front of the north gallery. He walked

with me into the city one Saturday morning, and while the servants were cleaning the church for the Sunday's service, we took our seats in the opposite gallery, and enjoyed this triumph of the elder Bacon over Rysbrack, whose bust of the poet, auditor Benson at length contrived to get into Westminster Abbey. I hope he mentioned it to Mrs. Siddons, because her own knowledge both of sculpture and Milton merited such a gratification.

CHAP. IV.

SEASON OF 1790-1. — MRS. ESTEN, HER FINE TALENTS. — MR. KING REPLACED AT DRURY LANE, BY MR. KEMBLE. DEATH OF EDWIN. — GRIMACE. — MR. KEMBLE ACTS CHARLES SURFACE. — MR. MUNDEN'S FIRST APPEARANCE. — MRS. SIDDONS RE-ENGAGED. — SIEGE OF BELGRADE. — SCHOOL FOR ARROGANCE. — DEATH OF BEARD. — SKETCH OF HIM. — PANTHEON OPERA. — BATE DUDLEY. — HIS WOODMAN. — O'KEEFE. — MERRY. — WILD OATS. — OLD DRURY FINALLY CONDEMNED. — ACCOUNT OF HER LAST MOMENTS. — OLD AND MODERN THEATRES COMPARED. — THE HON. F. NORTH'S KENTISH BARONS. — NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOURS. — COLMAN'S SURRENDER OF CALAIS.

The first event of any theatrical importance in the winter season of 1790-1, was an acquisition of an enchanting woman and most interesting actress to the boards of Covent Garden. I allude to the performance of Mrs. Esten, in Rosalind, on the 20th of October. In her figure she was delicate, not tall, but graceful, and aware of the interest attached to the languor of sensibility. She had an eye that really did any thing that it pleased, aided by such lengthened fringes, as Byron or Moore have bestowed upon the beauties of warm climates.

The daughters of Comedy have a Scylla and Charybdis in their art, like other people; and rarely pass with such perfect skill, as to be uninjured by either affectation or vulgarity. The highest refinement, to a mixed audience, always savours of the former. A careless indulgence of mirth, and a desire to provoke excessive laughter, drops blamed, or unblamed, into the latter.

Mrs. Esten's mother was the once celebrated Mrs. Bennett, upon whose novels our ladies depended for all the interesting romance of upper life, and looked not always in vain for a charm against the morning's ennui. No man need be ashamed of such reading as could amuse our greatest statesmen; and I confess I am inclined to attribute greater merit to such inventions, than to productions of a graver character, but so constructed, as to be useless to the wise and repulsive to the unlearned. From this mother Mrs. Esten received her mental accomplishments — perhaps something of the *novel* adhered to her through life.

She had really produced a great sensation in Edinburgh. From the quality of her voice, her tragedy coloured a little after Mrs. Siddons. In comedy she seemed as if her effects would be as gay and brilliant as those of Miss Farren, did not some concealed uneasiness check the animal spirits, and whisper to the actress, that she *herself* was not happy. But this characteristic quality of Mrs.

Esten was highly favourable to her in such a character as Rosalind. "Dear Celia, I show more "mirth than I am mistress of;" and passages out of number of a similar nature will crowd into the reader's memory to verify this remark. Her Indiana, a part seldom now before us, was given with infinite delicacy and grace. Her Monimia, her Ophelia, her Lady Townley, her Belvidera, all evinced more or less captivations in the actress; and after the two greatest names of her time, and as combining partially some of the excellencies of both, I know nothing that ought to stand before Mrs. Esten. Again I must notice the eloquence of her eye, as the unrivalled magic, that perhaps compels me to this decision.

On the 23d of October, Mr. Kemble replaced Mr. King, in the business at Drury Lane, for which he was so qualified; but perhaps in doing so replaced him in those town habits which were so fatal to his fortune. After playing all night with a sharper, at a fashionable club, and losing every thing, KING discovered that he had been bubbled, and hinted his suspicions to his antagonist; who coolly said to him, "I *always* play with marked "cards; why don't YOU?" King was happy in the new arrangement, for it gave him all the support in his art that he had been used to, without the mortification of a nominal management divested even of the shadow of authority.

On the 30th of the same month, Covent Garden

lost, if not in value, yet in utility, more than Drury Lane acquired — Edwin died. This singular being was the absolute victim of sottish intemperance. I have seen him brought to the stage-door at the bottom of a chaise, senseless and motionless. Poor Brandon, on these occasions, was the practising physician of the theatre. If the cloaths could be put upon him, and he was pushed on to the lamps, he rubbed his stupid eyes for a minute, consciousness and brilliant humour awakened together, and his acting seemed only the richer for the bestial indulgence that had overwhelmed him. His last performance was at the Haymarket Theatre, always the palace of jocularity, — there, on the 2d of August he acted the Gregory Gubbins of the Battle of Hexham, and announced unconsciously the *wonderful alteration* that came upon him. On the 6th of November they buried him in the churchyard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, and near to the grave of Shuter, an actor of voluptuous broad-faced humour, who had little in common with Edwin. The fun of Edwin was of a coyer nature, "that "would be wooed and not unsought be won," — you waited for it, but were never disappointed. He classed, I imagine, rather with Weston, and Weston seems to have had the fortune of our own Liston in his face, that no earthly being could see it without being thrown into convulsive fits of laughter.

I take the liberty to remark, that however agreeable it may be to excite this burst of laughter, it is in reality little flattering to the actor; it is natural distortion or pure grimace; features below the standard of just expression, or gestures silly and even indecent, that for the most part excite it. The great fame of the actor can only arise from just delineation of character. A proper estimate of the art itself, or a rational self esteem, should equally lead a man to disdain what a mere trick can acquire, and the exhibition of personal debasement usually provokes. A great actor forbad his children to see him in his farcical characters; he therefore thought that mummery degraded him.

On the 10th of November Mr. Kemble acted, for the first time in London, the part of Charles Surface in the School for Scandal. I should better have liked to see him in Joseph. However, although the public never admired the performance, he told me himself that Mr. Sheridan complimented him with having entirely executed his design. I confess I a little doubted the sincerity of the declaration, and well knowing the author's peculiar anxiety to keep up the strength of his cast, I can forgive the finesse by which he strove to retain the greatest name in his theatre in the hero of his greatest production. When I say above, that I had rather have seen Mr. Kemble in Joseph, I would guard against any implied preference of him to Palmer; that

actor's representation of this sentimental hypocrite was as perfect a thing as even King's Lord Ogleby, or Parsons's Corbaccio.

On December 2d, Mr. Munden, an actor of great provincial celebrity, made his first bow at Covent Garden Theatre in the character of Sir Francis Gripe, in the Busy Body. Since the days of Shuter nothing had been so rich, for Wilson was not a tithe of him; — and his mind seemed teeming with every surprise of comic humour; which his features expressed by an incessant diversity of playful action, and his utterance conveyed in an articulation of much force and neatness. He was received by a very crowded house with triumphant applause; and, with the proper confidence of a great master in his art, he acted in the farce also, the facetious Jemmy Jumps. Here he felt some little alarm from the recent impression of poor Edwin; but he was above imitation, and played from himself so peculiarly and divertingly, that he pleased even those who could not think him equal to Edwin; and although the latter was a master in musical science, Munden sang the *Fair-haired Laddie* in a style so powerful, as to show that burletta had gained in him nearly as much as comedy.

Mr. Kemble now announced that Mrs. Siddons was re-engaged at Drury Lane. By his own energy, the house had suffered little from her absence. — She had, in various places during her tour, gained money along with the grand object, health; and

strengthened a number of honourable connexions by paying visits to our nobility at their mansions in the country. After an absence therefore of two years, our great actress returned to Isabella on the 7th of December, and the Grecian Daughter on the 14th. The admirers of genius crowded again as usual about her standard, though the manager only called upon her three times in the whole month of December.

On the 1st day of the new year he was ready with the Siege of Belgrade, to employ all his musical strength, under such a composer as Storace, and Cobb had tried to equal the effect of his own Haunted Tower in situations of operatic effect. The letter duet, introduced in the present opera, perfectly enchanted the audience.

Mr. Holcroft has occasionally been mentioned as a very assiduous writer for the stage. He was studious in modern languages, and saw the English use to be made of French comedies, though he did not succeed so well as Murphy in their naturalization. On the 4th of February he produced, at Covent Garden Theatre, his *School for Arrogance*, and the critics of the day, "being sand-blind, high-gravel-blind," could only fancy that the original play was French. Topham had now lost the powerful hand which sustained the *World* newspaper; and though Mr. Este was eccentric in point of style, yet he was a scholar, a gentleman, and a man of general reading; and with respect to theatricals,

he really understood the subject; was conversant with foreign stages, as well as our own; and actually threw out in his rapid hints, rather than essays, much good remark and refined taste.

Holcroft had merely followed Mrs. Inchbald into the comic theatre of Destouches, and brought away *Le Glorieux*; drest him in English drugget, and compelled him to speak *prose*, while he remained in this country. The *arrogance* of this play is purely French, and the *school* of it solely disciplined by French manners. Perhaps the only way to produce the full effect of such plots and characters in our language, is to throw them about a century further back — by which our blank verse might be obtained as some balance for the versification of the original; and our poetical and figurative diction might compensate for the want of airiness and naïveté, which are not in our character, and consequently not in our language. I believe Holcroft subsequently cut this play down to three acts, a treacherous and degrading experiment. Let comedy die at once, rather than lead the life of a farce — the consequence of the play is gone, and its fable becomes unintelligible. Besides, if the matter composing two acts can be cut away, and no deficiency be apparent, what is the skill of the author—where the unity and continuity of his interest? A manager will sometimes say to an author, "If you will *not* do it, I must?" — Perhaps, if he regards his reputation, he will curtail his piece

himself; if he consults his interest, he will intreat the manager to do it for him. It has been stated to me formerly, on great authority, that managers have been won, by the solicitation for a song, to think favourably of a whole opera.

On the date last mentioned (4th February, 1791), died at his house, at Hampton, John Beard, Esq., formerly one of the patentees of Covent Garden Theatre. Mr. Beard was, in his youth, regularly bred to music in the King's Chapel, and he sang in one other chapel, that of Cannons, by the wanton satire of Pope thus characterised:

> "And now the chapel's silver bell you hear,
> That summons you to all the pride of pray'r:
> Light *quirks* of music, broken and uneven,
> Make the soul dance upon a *jig* to Heaven."*

And thus did the tender bard of Twickenham allude to the sublimities, probably of the great

* With all my adoration of Pope's verses, I could never be the dupe of his pretended virtues. When one considers the trembling hypocrisy, the occasional falsehoods consequent upon his practice, it appears to be astonishing that, for the affected moral ends of satire, any being can be found to persist in so hateful a course. What, after all, is this satire, for whose indulgence a man sacrifices so many of the virtues? The strong feeling of the *ridiculous* in others always arises from our PRIDE: were we alive to our own imperfections, we should be ashamed of our mirth, and alarmed at our egotism. When Pope crawled so malignantly among the splendors of Cannons, he merited that Johnson should have growled through the Grotto at Twickenham, in his *hearing*,—

> "A charming habitation — for a TOAD."

Handel, whose Esther was performed at Cannons, and young Beard assisted in the choir, before the Duke of CHANDOS and his noble visitors.

Mr. Beard became eminent both as an actor and singer. His merits won for him the affections of Lady Henrietta Herbert, daughter of James Earl Waldegrave, and widow of Lord Edward Herbert. She had, unfortunately, nothing to bestow upon him but her hand, and he struggled through many embarrassments, that she might not feel uneasy in the declension of her consequence. But the unavoidable conviction, that she had only plunged in difficulties the person whom she best loved, preyed upon her spirits, and she fell a victim to the disorders, which melancholy brought upon her, in the year 1753. He had acted with Garrick now for some years, when a second marriage, with the daughter of Mr. Rich, of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, changed the scene of his utility, and soon gave him the management, along with a considerable fortune. His first appearance there was on the 10th of October, 1759, when he acted Macheath in the Beggar's Opera; the celebrated Miss Brent was his Polly. How he acted and sang may be conceived from the circumstance, that the piece *again* ran 52 nights. In 1768 he retired from the theatre, and as in those days it was practicable to do, with a handsome fortune; which enabled him, in private life, to gratify to the utmost the liberality and benevolence of his nature. They,

who were the best able to appreciate him, have invariably stated, that he was unrivalled as a singer, delightful as a companion, steady in his friendships, and honourable in every relation of life. For the advantage of the world, that life was extended to the term of 74 years. Some slight parallel, which my mind was forming between Beard and Kemble, may be allowed as natural, and only lamented as deficient. I did once expect, with confidence, that we should hear of Kemble's Theatre, as we had heard of Garrick's — that a splendid fortune would have compensated a life of labour; and that his retirement and his death might have been among us. But I must not anticipate details, that await the progress of this narrative.

My first mention of Mrs. Esten expressed what I felt from the series of her efforts. She added, on the 11th, a very beautiful edition of Isabella, and placed herself, unquestionably, next to Mrs. Siddons in her most captivating achievement. Four days after this, her Letitia Hardy, in the Belle's Stratagem, exhibited her captivations of every sort; but, I confess, Mrs. Pope in this part reigned paramount with me; unapproachable for either grace or enthusiasm.

On the 17th of February, the Pantheon opened as an opera-house. The effect of the building, thus changed from its original use, I perfectly remember. The boxes were small, and the whole had a confined appearance. The stage, too, wanted

amplitude, and the dancers came nearer to the pit than was desirable to their best display. I heard the last act of Armida from Pacchierotti and Mara, and consequently the perfection of musical expression. The Théodore with Didelot in the ballet of Amphion and Thalia, exhibited an union of grace and agility, which suitably closed a day always to be remembered by me. I had dined, I recollect, that day at Mrs. Cowley's with a party of great conversational powers. Poetry, ancient and modern, found advocates, and the beauties marshalled on either side were brilliantly recited. The display of Hebrew sublimities, which were provoked from De Coetlegon, by rather too strong a praise from his fair host of modern lyrics, led me, at my leisure, to Lowth, and the Bishop to an examination, the result of which, as might be supposed, reached beyond mere literary criticism.

Mr. Kemble had done much for opera, by the combination which I have recently alluded to; yet Mr. Harris was a manager of great tact, ably seconded by Lewis, and though his singers were decidedly of the native school, yet with such a pure simplicity as William Shield to compose for them, they were sure of admiration from all those (no small body) who boasted themselves superior to all foreign trick and sophistication, and called for strains such as flowed from the inspiration of Purcel and Handel, and who found their utmost ornament in the fancy of Arne.

For such an audience, Dudley Bate conceived his opera of the Woodman, and it was performed, during the season, 31 nights. The talent of this gentleman was of the adaptable useful class. Without having left anything so perfect as to last, he could in various departments of letters ensure a very brilliant success: his great fund was a knowledge of actual life, through which he had passed with sometimes little prudence, always with great courage. The editors of daily papers formerly defended their paragraphs with their swords, and in the storm of party conflict few escaped without injury. I wish the Reverend Gentleman had left behind him any sincere narrative of his most eccentric life; from what I know of him myself, and have heard from persons of credit, it would leave the pages of romance comparatively insipid.

O'Keefe, too, strengthened Covent Garden by his pleasant farce, called Modern Antiques, or the Merry Mourners; and Quick, Munden, and Mrs. Mattocks sent home the audiences "laughing to "their beds." Covent Garden Theatre, it may be remarked, had the decided preference of Majesty in its favour; so that Mr. Harris stood his ground firmly against all that Mr. Kemble could array against him. Merry, so well known by his lyric verse, and anxious to write for Miss Brunton, whom he afterwards married, completed a tragedy called Lorenzo; but I was, I confess, disappointed in this play. He was assuredly not dramatic: so that a

few violent incidents excepted, the only chance it had, was the elegance of its diction, and some rather too palpable imitations of Shakspeare.

Mr. O'Keefe wound up the season, at this house, by his five-act comedy of Wild Oats, in which he placed his Jack Rover to run against the Dramatist of Reynolds. The same mercurial actor, Lewis, performed these rapid gentlemen; and without trying either play by standards to which they never submitted, it is but justice to both to say, that more amusement was never given. All is bustle, and whim, and laugh; and criticism has seldom undertaken more ungracious toil than in its elaborate attempts to persuade the audiences of Reynolds and O'Keefe, that they ought, by no means, to have allowed themselves to be entertained.

Drury Lane Theatre was finally condemned, and the last performance of the company, on Garrick's stage, was on the 4th June, 1791, when they acted the Country Girl, with No Song No Supper.

The following pleasantry, on this occasion, merits to be preserved.

"THE DEATH OF OLD DRURY.

"On Saturday night, of a *gradual decay*, and in the 117th year of her age, died *Old Madam Drury*, who existed through *six reigns*, and saw many generations pass in review before her. She remembered Betterton in his declining age; lived in intimacy with *Wilkes*, *Booth*, and *Cibber*; and knew *old Macklin* when he was a stripling.

"Her hospitality exceeded that of the English character, even in its early days of festivity, having almost through the whole of her life entertained from *one to two thousand persons, of both sexes,* six nights out of seven in the week. She was an excellent poetess, could be *grave* and *gay* by turns, and yet sometimes (catching the disorder from *intrusive guests*) could be *dull* enough in all conscience.

"Her *memory* was most excellent, and her *singing* kept on in such a gradual state of improvement, that it was allowed her voice was better *the three or four last years* of her life, than when she was in her prime at the latter end of the last century.

"She had a *route* of near two thousand people at her house the *very night of her death;* and the old lady found herself in such high spirits, that she said she would give them 'No Supper' without a 'Song;' which being complied with, she fell gently back in her chair, and *expired without a groan.*

"Dr. Palmer (one of her family physicians) attended her in her last moments, and announced her dissolution to the company."

Things look lovely and facile in prospect, and the new theatre was expected to rise, like an exhalation, out of the ground, at the waving of Sheridan's hand. The progress was, however, tardy, for what that singular man seemed most to value all his life, an *expedient,* presented itself, in the new house erected in the Haymarket for the Italian Opera. While he could lease this theatre, the

other was not at all pressing; and it was only when matters were really pressing, that Sheridan could ever be got to do anything.

I shall not at the proper time refuse to Mr. Holland the credit of erecting the most beautiful playhouse that I have ever seen. But I shall be indulged in a few expressions of mere gratitude to its predecessor; which Wren had constructed and the Adamses improved; and which had been, I was going to say, consecrated by the verse of Dr. Johnson, and rendered the steady temple of fame and fortune, by the genius and the prudence of Mr. Garrick. If intellectual power were to be measured by an architectural scale, I should readily admit, that while you could conceive a grander edifice, fancy might be allowably suffered to exert itself upon a theatre worthy of Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble, Miss Farren and Mrs. Jordan.

Our present theatres differ materially from that of Garrick. The gallery formed more of his plan, than it does of ours. It came down upon the lower circle of boxes, and its visitors were not seldom exceedingly intelligent persons and passionate admirers of the drama: they sat in a very favorable position for the enjoyment of a play, and seconded the pit in the just distribution of censure and praise. The boxes did not contain anything like the number of persons now nightly visitors of the theatre, but certainly more real fashion. The necessities of proprietors had not then multiplied new renters

upon old renters, nor opened their doors to a free list extending beyond authors and newspapers, to nearly every review and magazine, which takes any sort of cognizance of theatrical amusements. Their private boxes, too, were few — what there was showed itself fairly as audience. Upon great occasions seven or eight rows of the pit were laid into the boxes, and then the old Drury exhibited, two months before it closed, £412 as the total taken at the door for the first benefit of Mrs. Siddons, after her return. London, however, was rapidly increasing, and it was conceived that larger theatres were demanded. All the articles of consumption, too, were upon the rise; among these were the salaries of performers; and the patentees thought that they needed not only more spectators, but greater prices. Both of these objects, they now determined to carry, on what they thought sure, because reasonable grounds. We may leave them for the present to mature their plan, while we turn to the theatre which should always be called Colman's, if the *little* theatre, in the changes of public taste, be not thought the more attractive appellation.

The late Earl of Guilford, whom I had once the honour to call my friend, whose conviviality and pleasantry endeared the name of Frank North, wherever it was heard, had written, like Colman, a play upon old English manners, which he called the Kentish Barons, and on the 25th of June it was

acted for the first time at the summer theatre. There was occasionally a vein of genuine poetry in the dialogue; but the incident was one of pure invention, but little probable; and his antiquarian zeal had run costume much beyond convenience. They who amuse themselves with Strutt's collections, or glean from the useful chapters with which Dr. Henry enriched his History of England, may have learned, that there was a time when our beaux wore enormous pikes to their boots or shoes; and that these were chained to the knees of the wearer; so as to exhibit a man, at perfect liberty, walking in fetters. The author's punctilious exactness excited a smile, and perhaps to see the solemn Bensley skating through a scene in these cumbrous appendages was rather a severe tax upon gravity —

"For RIGHT, too rigid, hardens into wrong."

Mr. Kemble himself carried the attention to costume far, but as far only as he found *grace*; there he stopt. Exactness might load these pikes upon the shoes with portable mirrors, and looking downward be once more an argument of self-love instead of confusion.

Mrs. Inchbald, pursuing her course of French literature, now produced her very entertaining comedy called *Next Door Neighbours*; and in conformity with her title, she took, as a sort of cause and effect, two French pieces to work upon, *Le*

Dissipateur and *L'Indigent*. These she treated with that skill which she had now acquired, and the theatre was certainly indebted to her facility.

Mrs. Jordan kindly came this season to act for Mrs. Bannister's benefit. Every body was disposed to assist a lady whom all respected and admired. In the mean time, Colman was in rehearsal with a second old English play, which took off some of the lavish raw material, that had dressed the Kentish Barons; and from its popularity wore out its habiliments — I allude to the *Surrender of Calais*, another of those happy imitations, which, however close, are not servile, and seem to resemble Shakspeare, as a sport, rather than a necessity. How far our great dramatic poet looked at the state of his company, while writing his play, I cannot determine — he seems to have been governed, as to characters, solely by his fable. The summer manager always appeared to write for his green-room, and to value himself upon exactly fitting his actors with proper vehicle for their talents. What he did in this way for Bannister, was really an achievement; but the interest about him, and the unsophisticated nature of his acting, made him one of the surest cards that any manager could play with.

Bensley, in the grand tirade before Edward, as Eustache de St. Pierre, became absolutely sublime, from the virtuous energy, that seemed to dilate his person, and thunder from his sonorous organ. It

really was a display not to be forgotten. The play, commencing the 30th of July, was acted 28 times in the brief remainder of the summer season.

As an amusing instance how *hints* may be taken, in the *grave* scene in Hamlet, one delver asks the other, "Who builds stronger than the mason, "the shipwright, or the carpenter?" The answer is, "The gallows maker, for that frame out-"lives a thousand tenants:" on this hint, Colman constructed a brace of these frame-makers; and sent on Parsons to "pluck out the heart of their "mystery." The scene, like its original, was a favourite always; and Colman defied, though Garrick did not, the criticism of Voltaire, and all the Laharpes and Chateaubriants he had left behind him. The author of Zaïre found no great difficulty in overthrowing the feeble fences that Horace Walpole set up against him, when he advanced to insult, rather than attack, the territory of Shakspeare —but the race of French critics seem to have slunk away from the preface of Johnson; where, indeed, the *seal* is put upon all the flimsy pretences of that vain people of critical legislators: — I say *people* of critics, for they ALL detail the same arguments, and there is little difference in their force between the Abbé and the Shopkeeper.

CHAP. V.

WINTER SEASON OF 1791-2. — MR. FAWCETT AT COVENT GARDEN. — MR. CHARLES KEMBLE. — DRURY LANE REMOVED TO THE HAYMARKET. — NEW PRICES. — PRELUDE. — OSCAR AND MALVINA, BY BYRNE. — REYNOLDS'S NOTORIETY. — MRS. BILLINGTON. — RYDER DIES. — DAY IN TURKEY. — LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGUE. — WARBURTON'S SINGULARITY AS TO HER LETTERS. — MRS. JORDAN. — PUBLIC OPINION. — HER APOLOGY. — MR. KEMBLE'S DIFFICULTIES. — CYMON REVIVED. — HUNIADES. — MRS. SIDDONS ACTS Q. ELIZABETH IN RICHARD III. — MR. KEMBLE FORCED INTO A DUEL BY MR. J. AICKIN. — ROAD TO RUIN. — RICHARDSON'S COMEDY OF THE FUGITIVE. — JEALOUS WIFE. — MR. KEMBLE AND MRS. SIDDONS. — DRURY ITALIANIZED. — P. HOARE'S DIDO. — LITTLE THEATRE. — MRS. WHITELOCK. — MRS. SHERIDAN'S DEATH. — MRS. BANNISTER RETIRES.

THE winter season of 1791-2 was opened by Covent Garden with the Dramatist, in which Mrs. Merry, formerly Miss Brunton, acted for the first time since her marriage. To have yielded to the ardour and accomplishments of Merry could be a matter of no surprise to any person who had enjoyed his society. Bating his tendency to play, which was a fever in him that nothing could render intermittent, he was one of the most original and captivating men whom I have ever known. But

unhappily for himself and his former associates, he now became perfectly *rabid* with the French revolution; associated himself with the radical press, and spoke its furious and disgusting language; by degrees he detached himself from men who could not echo, and disdained to humour him; and though complexionally indolent, his political passion lashed him into a daily ridicule of all that ages have respected, and he became one of the eyes of Argus (a newspaper so named), and amused himself with what he called "common stuff" and "stars and strings." Over this transformation even the muse possessed no power; and the poet and the gentleman vanished together.

The 21st of September brought upon the boards of Covent Garden Theatre Mr. Fawcett, the younger, from the York company. He made his entré in Caleb, in He would be a Soldier, a part of great nonsense and rattle, in which a man of Fawcett's sound common sense descends to amuse vulgarity; conscious at the same time, that he possesses powers of higher value; which, without any great refinement, interest deeply, and urge the moral lesson home to the heart. There is in this actor, whenever the opportunity is given, as great a command over the tender affections as can be displayed in characters of middle life. I have a pleasure in thus detaching his real excellencies from a crowd of buffooneries, which he always seems to disdain while he exhibits them; and for which there are beings *naturally* gifted.

Mr. Kemble, during the summer, had been greatly alarmed by the very serious illness of his brother Charles, then a youth of fifteen, whom he had placed, three years before, at the College of Douay, in order to his obtaining all those advantages which he had himself formerly derived. The reported attainments of his brother gave him the highest satisfaction. But on this journey he expected to find him in a very dangerous state of health. He had, however, happily recovered; and, under the care of a friend, was proceeding on his way to England. They met upon the road.

Mr. Kemble was sitting alone in his carriage, reading. As the other carriage advanced in the opposite direction, he raised his eyes from the book, and exclaimed, "Charles!" The meeting was quite theatrical; for, though neither Henry the Eighth nor Francis the First, yet certainly one day the Wolsey and Cromwell of the drama, like the monarchs just named, —

> "Those two lights of men
> Met in the vale of Arde;" —

and probably in their embraces, as much exceeded the kings in *sincere affection*, as the latter in splendor surpassed every previous exhibition of royal fraternity. Mr. Kemble was never an "inquisitive traveller;" he wanted only to see his brother; he now saw him quite restored, and they returned to this country in company.

Upon his arrival, Mr. Charles Kemble, for a short

time, accepted a situation in the Post Office, and he was removed from one position in it to another; but the *foreign* department proving no more to his taste than the inland, with the tendency of all his family, he resolved to try his fortune on the stage. He soon, therefore, quitted Lombard Street, to make that experiment, which, after a year's rustication, sent him to the metropolis: a result which has so gratified the public, and, I can fairly add, done honour to the profession.

The removal of the Drury Lane company to a theatre so uncommonly splendid as Novosielski's Opera-house, seemed to the patentees a favourable opportunity for asking a small encrease of the prices of admission; and, after much noise and clamour, they established six shillings for the boxes and three shillings and sixpence for the pit. A prelude, called Poor Old Drury! slight, but well enough aimed, and written by Cobb, suffered more than any thing in the contest. The great joke was the damage done in transferring the scenery and the properties from one house to the other. But the spectators seemed to think that the splendid theatre itself suffered most by these invasions. Nothing but a conflagration ever produces uniform scenery. The old, though too low for the encreased size, is found too good and too plentiful to be thrown away, and its adaptation is always a very disjointed business. To one point of this prelude a reasonable objection may be raised.—It is said most ridi-

culously by an Italian singer and a French dancing master, that *dancing* and the *opera* should always go together in contempt of *sense* and *nature.* It would be well if writers who sport such ideas as these, in compliment to old prejudices, would a little enquire what they mean. It did not become the author of the *Siege of Belgrade*, a mere farrago from a hundred Italian operas, to talk in this way; and those who at best in dancing reach only as far as divertisement, might learn a little respect for the learned and enchanting ballets of Noverre. I once sat with Dr. Charles Burney during the representation of Iphigenie en Aulide, and his classic mind was in perfect ecstacy at the deep interest and graceful splendor of that beautiful version of Grecian history or fable. And then, here comes a farce writer, in his rudiments, and lectures away upon *sense* and *nature!* And all this, moreover, in a house constructed for opera, and soon to exhibit operas again; and which had afforded the destitute a seasonable shelter for the *sense* and *nature* to which they so exclusively pretended. The period, too, when most of these qualities were to be found in us, produced a beautiful species of entertainment combining both the opera and the ballet: I allude to the MASQUE, of which Jonson was the actual inventor, and which Milton, in emulation of that great poet, did not disdain to compose.

Indeed Covent Garden Theatre, on the 20th of October, exhibited a very captivating ballet, called

Oscar and Malvina, which the good taste of Mr. Byrne had rendered a nearly permanent attraction of the theatre. Byrne himself took Oscar, and Follet strode through his fierce rival Carrol; and for Malvina he brought over Mad. St. Amand from Paris; and her ease and grace, her pointed action and just expression, delighted the spectators. Scenery and music lent their brilliant aids to the inventor of the ballet, and thus Mr. Bryne drew interest from the page of Ossian, as Noverre had done from that of Euripides.

The Crusade had not drawn Reynolds very widely away from his proper sphere, for by the 5th of November he was ready with another dramatist under the title of Notoriety. The title implies the passion of Nominal, the hero. As the first comedy aimed to make dramatic effects popular; the second endeavoured to render popular effects dramatic; and they succeeded equally, and by means somewhat similar; for the characters were conceived to run tolerably parallel to each other. In short, it was the gay and entertaining effort of a young author, with a very quick discernment of the ridiculous in life; who occasionally threw in very happy points of dialogue, and whom dulness never approached for a moment. Among those points which amused the audience, he allowed himself a joke at the *sleeping* partners of the greatest house in the nation. This in Reynolds was rather taste than politics. He hated long speeches much; but

he at all times hated faction more, and should not have raised a *laugh* for the gloomy assailants of our representatives. It may be as well to show, as a lesson to managers, that Mr. Harris cast into Notoriety, Lewis, Quick, Wilson, Munden, Johnstone, and Farren, the father of the present actor of that name. The ladies were Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Wells, and Mrs. Esten.

The success of music at the rival theatre led Mr. Harris to re-engage Mrs. Billington, who had been absent for a couple of seasons. Kemble immediately added Madame Mara to his operatical strength, and she appeared in Mandane on the 17th November. There was little, to be sure, in which Madame Mara could be employed, unless a series of operas had been written for her of the complexion of Artaxerxes. She was in truth a most exquisite musician, but not the least of an actress. Majesty she could not assume; she was too feeble in her person; and even when to sing in an orchestra, sometimes gave offence, because she was compelled to be seated, when she was expected to be standing. Add to this that she never spoke our language tolerably, and much could not reasonably be expected. Yet she sang the melodies of Arne, as she did those of Handel, in a style so pure, and in a manner so easy, as to place her first most decidedly among the greatest singers of *her* time, or any time.

Mr. Ryder, the comedian, died on the 25th of

this month, at Sandy Mount in Ireland. He had a great deal of hard and diversified talent: was always useful, but never, I think, pleasing. He was a man of reading and reflexion; and one of his daughters was singularly accomplished. I have read some of her translations of modern latinity, in which she could have had no predecessor or guide; and her versification was exact and elegant. While this praise is given to the lady, it is necessarily reflected upon the father; for to what less than parental care could such accomplishment be owing? Rudiments, particularly of the dead languages, are always too painful to be the objects, I think, of female choice: those once given, to proceed may be pleasing, as it gratifies curiosity, and confers distinction.

On the 3d of December Mrs. Cowley brought out her comedy called A Day in Turkey, or The Russian Slaves. The charming letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montague are in every hand, and in consequence every body became enabled to display the secrets of Turkish harems; our fancies teemed with visions of lazy luxury, and the turban'd Turk became a resource to our dramatist at second hand, when actual observation fell short, and domestic life among ourselves supplied no novelty. Female plays usually build a good deal upon the sex; Mrs. Cowley secured the talents in her present comedy of Mrs. Pope, Mrs. Esten, Mrs. Mattocks, and Mrs. Martyr. The interest springs from

the hatred of Russians and Turks, and was by no means strongly felt by the audience. That happened to Mrs. Cowley, which has happened to others; that things glorious in imagination are but cold in their realities. In her Belle's Stratagem the enthusiasm with which she points to some of the incidents of the present play, might have led one to expect uncommon effort in their exhibition — but there was much bustle to little purpose. The piece should clearly have been an opera.

As I have alluded to Lady Mary Wortley's letters, I take the opportunity of showing a degree of literary blindness, insensibility, or prejudice seldom, I believe, equalled. I have now before me a manuscript letter from Bishop Warburton, dated from Prior Park, July 1763, and intended to amuse the ladies at Mount Edgecombe. He thus speaks of the genius, that his friend Pope had adored. "But literary news, while I have my senses, is more "in my province. I suppose, as *fashionable* ladies, "(for you see I am not disposed to compliment) "you have read Lady Mary's letters with great "eagerness, and laid them aside with as much con-"tempt. I suppose they are genuine, even from "their very insignificance." That editors adopt the passions of the authors whom they publish, is a disgraceful truth. The unmanly persecution of this lady by Pope should have ceased with his existence. Warburton thought himself warranted to omit the indecencies of the poet's writings, and

preserved his hatred where it disgraced him. The Christian and the bishop were equally "strong against the deed." At this very time (1763) Doctor Smollet thus characterised her epistolary writings. "The publication of these letters will "be an immortal monument to the memory of Lady "M. W. M., and will show, as long as the English "language endures, the sprightliness of her wit, "the solidity of her judgment, the elegance of her "taste, and the excellence of her real character. "These letters are so bewitchingly entertaining, "that we defy the most phlegmatic man on earth to "read one without going through with them, or, "after finishing the third volume, not to wish there "were twenty more of them." But then Smollett himself, according to Warburton, "was a vagabond "Scot, who wrote nonsense ten thousand strong." And thus the GUIDES of reason persecute one another!

I take this opportunity to observe, that, during the present season, apologies had been frequently made for Mrs. Jordan's indispositions, and perhaps the theatre itself might lend some countenance to the complaints made by the daily press. But this charming woman lay open to attacks of another nature, and she addressed an explanation of her conduct as to the provision she had made for her children, dated, oddly enough, Treasury Office, 30th November, 1791. In this letter there was a phrase sufficiently unguarded — "I would not ob- "trude upon the public an allusion to any thing

" that does not relate to my profession, in which " alone, I may without presumption say, I am " accountable to them."

Her assertion that she had never capriciously deserted her duty to the public, and was always unable to act, when she had declined to appear, was not accepted by certain persons; and she was considerably annoyed on the 10th of December, when she acted Roxalana in the Sultan. She therefore suddenly advanced to the lamps, and addressed the audience in the following words :—

" Ladies and Gentlemen,

" I should conceive myself utterly unworthy of your favour, if the slightest mark of public disapprobation did not affect me very sensibly.

" Since I have had the honour and the happiness to strive here to please you, it has been my constant endeavour, my unremitting assiduity, to merit your approbation. I beg leave to assure you, upon my honour, that I have never absented myself one minute from the duties of my profession, but from real indisposition. Thus having invariably acted, I do consider myself under the public protection."

And thus, at all events, an end was put to the disturbance before the curtain. As to any that occasionally reached me as happening behind it, all that I need say is, that it is a perplexing situation, to manage without absolute controul — How all the

claims of jarring interests are to be conciliated—how all imputations of very natural partiality are to be disproved or silenced, is of the utmost moment to a theatrical community, and a burthen under which few managers absolutely preserve their equanimity. Nor is this all; there is sometimes interference from persons, whose attachments only connect them with the stage, and a cabal is often formed that shakes the sceptre of the monarch of a theatre.

By this time Mr. Kemble began to feel that, however smoothly the conditions of the management had been arranged, there were impediments in the way of his plans; and of these he at times could not *but* complain. Drury Lane was besides paralyzed by getting to the western side of the Haymarket, and the plunge into the Opera-house renewed the fable of Salmacis:

> Quisquis in hos fontes vir venerit, exeat inde
> Semivir; et tactis subitò mollescat in undis.
>
> METAM. *Lib.* IV. *v.* 385.

Nothing short of absolute perusal of all the offered pieces should convince me, that the talent of the country was so debased as to afford nothing better than what was now produced. A vast deal of money was lavished upon Garrick's trifling opera of Cymon. The literary talents of Mr. Garrick were absolutely confined to epigram and epilogue. His letters have little neatness, and his attempts at the drama should be narrowly scrutinized, that his actual part in them may be ascertained. Cymon decorated highly, and its three females, Urganda, Sylvia and

Fatima, acted by Mrs. Crouch, Miss Hagley and Mrs. Jordan, brought some fashionable audiences into that beautiful theatre; and showed, in spite of their prelude, a leaning to the original uses of the house. The performance of Cymon closed the year 1791.

The reader will have seen that the *Siege of Belgrade* had furnished a subject for opera of consi derable attraction. The siege of that place in 1456 by the Turks, under Mahomet the Second, now was worked into a tragedy by Miss Hannah Brand. The besiegers are repelled by the valour of Hunïades, a character performed by Mr. Kemble. The authoress herself acted the heroine Agmunda. How it was effected I now forget, but she absolutely withdrew the play for the purpose of cutting out the hero, and the tragedy was evidently not the worse for his departure; for the audience were not a jot more indifferent to the new title of Agmunda, than they had been to the more barbarous name of Hunïades. If my memory does not deceive me, the costume in this play was somewhat unusual, and provoked a laugh, — I think, black with gold ornaments; and the first of May unluckily offered an association, which struck the fancy with images unfriendly to tragedy.

Mrs. Siddons had resumed her performances by the magical Isabella, to which I have always seen her admirers the most strongly attracted. Probably to strengthen her brother's Richard III. on the 7th of February, she acted Queen Elizabeth in that

tragedy. There is no question about her pre-eminence in this "relenting shallow-thoughted "woman." But the unsparing ambition of Richard has something of an immoral effect upon the audience; and their proper sympathy with his victims is blunted by the *certainty* of his success, and the daring intrepidity with which he hurries them on from one atrocity to another. There is something in triumphant villany against which the moral sense is never sufficiently guarded. The scene with the princes is not to me greatly affecting; it tires rather than softens the hearer; it is disagreeable rather than distressing; and I have commonly retreated from my place, until it had passed away. As this could never be done with Mrs. Siddons, I sat the scene out. Her look and action when she exclaims, "I am their mother, Sir," and endeavours to pass on with the children, absolutely beggared all description.

I certainly do not court occasions of differing with Mr. Steevens, and I need frequently my utmost strength to resist the power or the skill of his attacks. He has consigned the character of Queen Margaret in this play, and the dream of Clarence, to ridicule and contempt. I am sure that if Mrs. Siddons had remained longer on the stage, and devoted her last energies to the curses of Margaret, that she would literally have lifted the hair upon the heads of those who heard her, and left an impression of her power stronger than any part of her Lady Macbeth has supplied. The visit to the

" bottom of the monstrous world," and the other images of the dream, are in my judgment transcendant and sublime.

An occurrence took place about this time, that menaced the life of our great tragedian. He had, I know not how, found himself at table with Mr. James Aickin. Although the tones of that gentleman's voice were among the sweetest that ever met the ear, yet I have heard his temper was not happy. He had conceived himself injured by some arrangements of Mr. Kemble's management, and in this convivial meeting sought various opportunities to be personally rude to him. On the morning of the 1st of March, he walked with Mr. Kemble to some field in Marylebone, and there took his own mode of obtaining satisfaction. The elder Bannister somehow was pressed into the business. They placed Kemble exactly as they pleased. Aickin went a few paces from him, perhaps he hardly knew how many, and fired at his manager — fortunately for himself, as well as Kemble, he missed his aim. To return his fire, Mr. Kemble refused — " He had required satisfaction, and what he re- " quired he had now received." A reconciliation, as they call it, was then effected. He spoke to me afterwards upon the subject, and said " he saw " from his adversary's levelling at him, that he " was in no danger." Why is not a defiance of law by a positive breach of the peace punishable *after* the parties are satisfied? Should not the justice of the country be also satisfied? A heavy fine

might teach the duellist to moderate these violent tendencies.

Perhaps at no time in my remembrance did Covent Garden ever make equal effort to distance its proud rival. Merry's opera of the *Magician no Conjurer* failed on the 4th night, but the *Road to Ruin*, the most perfect of Mr. Holcroft's comedies, was acted thirty-eight nights in this season, though not brought out till the 18th of February. As it is nearly now as popular as it was two-and-thirty years ago, I am precluded from more than a general admission of its interest, its truth and nature. The ruined Goldfinch, as acted by Lewis, though extravagant, was astonishingly entertaining; and Munden's excellence in old Dornton has, I think, never been surpassed. Let me add, that Holman's young Dornton was extremely characteristic; ardent, generous, and affecting, a transcript from his own nature.

Mr. Joseph Richardson had a reputation for talent, which led the town to expect much from his comedy of the Fugitive, produced on the 20th of April. He had been received into the party and associated himself closely (too closely for his health) with Sheridan. He seemed to be always looking to the Rivals as his model, and affects the turn of his friend's sentences. He loves the *indiscretions of youth*, and runs a tilt against *early prudence*. But with a violation of propriety, of which Sheridan has no example, he has thrust his moral or immoral sententiousness into the mouth of an Admiral,

and makes his Cleveland declaim in the following style: —

"*Old Manly.* Yes, my son too, an abandoned profligate.

Admiral. Nay, if that were all, there might be hopes.— The early little irregularities that grow out of the honest passions of our nature, are sometimes an advantage to the ripened man; they carry their own remedy along with them; and when remedied they generally leave the person wiser and better than they found him — wiser for his experience, and better for the indulgence which they give him towards the infirmities of others — but a canting, whining, preaching profligate — a sermon maker at twenty — a fellow that becomes a saint before he's a man — a beardless hypocrite — a scoundrel that cannot be content with common homely sinning, but must give it a relish by joining a prayer with it in his mouth — of such a fellow there can be no hopes."

The sentiments here delivered are decidedly Sheridan's, and may be found in his plays. Apologies like these are incentives to youth — they pimp to the passions, and predict moral improvement as the ripened result of profligacy. Where utter perdition is escaped, let us rejoice with him who redeems his errors by his virtues; but let us not *send* out our youth upon the forlorn hope, and confidently expect their safe return. The arrangement of the latter half of the tirade echoes the tune of Absolute's reproof of Falkland.

"A poor industrious devil like me, who have toil'd, and drudg'd, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly, may, in pity, be allowed to swear and grumble a little; but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim, who has no difficulties but of his own creating, is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion." *Rivals*, p. 78.

I have thought it important to notice a hazardous moral in a work of elegance.

The Fugitive is, perhaps, rather too like the heiress in the principal incident. Julia Wingrove is a second Miss Alton, more worked out, as Mrs. Jordan was to act it. In the cast of the play the author was peculiarly happy. Both theatres, at present, might be challenged in vain to exhibit united such a host of positive first-rate ability. The men were — Bensley, Wroughton, Parsons, Palmer, Dodd, King, Wewitzer, Barrymore. The women — Miss Farren and Miss Pope; Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Webb, Mrs. Kemble, Mrs. Jordan. He had a prologue from Tickel, and an epilogue from Burgoyne. The parallel drawn by the former between the novice author, and the novice dressed for St. James's, was really worthy of his name.

> "Close to the palace as her chair draws near,
> The very tassels seem to quake with fear."

The General, working for Mrs. Jordan, fell greatly below what he had occasionally written for Miss Farren. The piece succeeded amply; but a degree of indolence came over its author, and he could not conquer it. He was a senator, and did not speak; a man of letters, and did not write; a proprietor of a theatre, who slept over its interests; he lived a few years the life of Sheridan, and as early as his 47th year, from the effects of a ruptured blood vessel, at an inn near Bagshot, he "died "and made no sign." Few men entered life with

more brilliant hopes than Richardson; he distinguished himself greatly at Cambridge; he did not follow his profession at the bar, but he contributed to the classical pleasantries then in vogue; his learning preserved his taste. That great discerner of merit, the late Duke of Northumberland, testified a sincere regard for him, and had, in return, Mr. Richardson's decided veneration. Mr. Richardson was convivial without much effort, was generally beloved and long regretted.

On the 28th of April, Mrs. Siddons acted Mrs. Oakley. Mr. Kemble performed Oakley, and Palmer the Major. The passion of jealousy tending strongly to tragedy, I thought it, in comedy, strong enough for Mrs. Siddons. Mrs. Oakley has excited more laughter in other hands, but not, I think, more attention. The performance was full of spirit and nature. Another novelty from this great actress I have to mention. After her Katharine, in Henry VIII. she recited Collins's Ode on the Passions, and assumed them in her look and gesture. Perhaps they never played round features equally expressive; and as an ardent admirer of the genius of Collins, I could not but wish, that his melancholy had been soothed by so bright a vision; but his end was dark and cheerless.

I have sported above with the conversion of the Drury Lane company to operatical uses. I am now to show the full extent, to which the tendency was carried. Mr. Prince Hoare was employed upon the Didone Abondonnata of Metastasio; and

fitted its music, I fear, not with suitable, but *English* words, distributed into recitative and air; and Dido, with immense splendor of scenery, dresses and decorations, was brought out on the 23d of May. Madame Mara was your Dido, Kelly Iarbas, and the pious Eneas Mrs. Crouch herself! There was, for garnish, a masque, in which Bannister was the Neptune, Miss Collins Venus, and the three Graces, Misses Decamp, Jacobs, and Heard. And yet all this, with the aid of Sedgewick, and Dignum, and Master Welsh, with supernumeraries out of number, lived only three or four nights, and then vanished like a dream. But the lovely power of Metastasio must not suffer from the harshness of another language, and the taste of a people requiring bolder situations in the drama, and a crowd of incidents arranged with little artifice, and ambitious only of striking effects. I have no means of consulting Mr. Hoare's version, but I willingly leave, upon this and every occasion, my sincere, though friendly attestation to his talent.

On the 1st of June, Covent Garden closed its brilliant season, that the theatre might be rebuilt; and on the 15th, the Haymarket also shut up, and left the little manager opposite to make his hay without further encroachment.

For he still considered any period beyond the middle of May as encroachment, and pleasantly told the great Patentees this, among other truths,

in a prelude, entitled *Poor Old Haymarket*, or *Two Sides of the Gutter*. He laughed then, and has always done so, at the rage for splendid theatres; and might easily, like others, have embarked a set of subscribers in a building scheme, had he thought that any thing more was essential to the purposes of playing, than neat accommodation, pieces carefully written — brilliantly, if possible; and ably, if not powerfully, acted.

On the 15th of June, Mrs. Whitelock, a sister of Mrs. Siddons, made her first appearance at the summer theatre, in the heroic Margaret of the Battle of Hexham. She certainly was Siddonian in figure and in countenance, and though suited to a theatre of more stately dimensions, approved herself to be a mistress of her profession. She most resembled the look of Mrs. Siddons in comedy. In tragedy, that wonderful woman assumed sublimity as a birthright, and had it in unapproachable possession.

On the 28th of June, Mr. Sheridan lost his wife, a lady of great personal loveliness, and possessing talent as a singer, which her husband, in his greatest need, would not consent should be exhibited for hire. She was, perhaps, the purest and sweetest vocalist of the English school. But the name of Linley is of great celebrity in musical science. Her portrait, by Sir Joseph Reynolds, is elegant and yet simple; singing and accompanying herself. He has caught her expression so happily, that I

have no doubt he *heard*, as well as saw, his most accomplished sitter.

The novelties of the summer season were of no moment; the manager himself was not ready, and Covent Garden had literally taken all that had any promise in the market. Just as the dog-days were over, on the 15th of August, Miss Decamp undertook Macheath, and the courtship of two such enormous jilts as old Bannister and Johnstone in Polly and Lucy. She acquitted herself with great spirit, and evidently surprised the audience with the extent of her musical powers.

After sustaining the heroines of English opera for 14 years, Mrs. Bannister, now seriously engaged with the cares of her young family, determined to retire, and on the 5th September, took her leave of the public on the same spot where, in the year 1778, she first received their applause. Anything like their censure, she had never for a moment experienced. There was an appearance of timidity constantly about her efforts; but her voice had great compass and sweetness, and her shake was pure and liquid.

Bannister returned thanks at the end of the season, and in the name of the proprietor invited the public next year to the present cottage, after they had enjoyed the splendid palaces prepared for the winter. He also thanked them for Lingo, a part to which he had succeeded on the death of Edwin.

CHAP. VI.

HOLLAND'S NEW COVENT GARDEN THEATRE. — RIOT AT THE NEW PRICES. — THE PIRATES. — MORTON'S PLAY OF COLUMBUS. — MORTON AND REYNOLDS COMPARED TOGETHER. — KEMBLE HIGHLY DISSATISFIED WITH SHERIDAN. — POWER OF THAT GREAT MAN. — MURDER OF THE FRENCH MONARCH. — KEMBLE AND HIS SISTER AT COLMAN'S. — EVERY ONE HAS HIS FAULT. — MRS. JORDAN — ANNA — FORCED ON MR. KEMBLE. — THE AUTHOR'S OWN DEBÛT. — THE PRIZE. — MURPHY'S SISTERS — PARTICULARLY EXAMINED OUT OF RESPECT TO HIM. — MURPHY'S FIGURE. — MR. KEMBLE'S PROLOGUE FOR HIS PLAY. — FALSE COLOURS. — ARMOURER. — HOW TO GROW RICH. — MRS. JORDAN'S LADY RESTLESS. — MRS. GIBBS. — LONDON HERMIT. — MR. KEMBLE'S OCTAVIAN — ITS PICTURESQUE POWER — GREAT EFFECTS IN IT. — SETTLEMENT WITH THE MANAGER.

Mr. Harris thought that the rise of prices, which had become absolutely necessary, would be at all events better justified by an obvious and recent expense. He therefore determined to make his innovation in his new building; and Mr. Holland had constructed, in the recess, a theatre in the lyral form, rather solid than light in its appearance, and of which the fronts of the boxes bulged something in the curve of a ship's side. The effect was

grand and imposing, as to the tiers and number of the boxes; but the gallery called the first, or two shilling gallery, had been hoisted up to the mansions of the gods; and those turbulent deities were indiscreetly banished the house altogether. The solitary shilling, however splendid, was disdained in the new establishment. This plan insulted two classes of frequenters. The *gout de comparaison* leads people to be tolerably content with their own position, while they see another worse. But when the persons who used to inhabit the first gallery, coming down as it did upon the roof of the lower boxes, saw themselves hoisted over three tiers, and scarcely able to see the actors, or what alone was of much moment, their faces; when they saw, too, no misery beyond their own; they could not but feel, that their modest quota had subjected them to contempt; and that they were to be worse treated than they had been, simply because their pockets had been spared. Thus the very humble man was denied his amusement altogether; and the next class was put into a worse situation, where every thing but his own condition seemed improved. As I cannot report the confusion of Babel, I shall say little as to the riot on the first night — the cat-call, the legitimate pipe of displeasure, that gives

"Order to sounds confused,"

was triumphant in the strife, and the actors played

unheard. Lewis was singularly qualified for the situation in which, as stage-manager, he now found himself: there was a frankness about him that testified to the honest truth that came from him. He was firm, as a gentleman always is; and with much tact seized upon a point, about which nobody in the house cared a rush, and assured the audience, that a *shilling gallery* should be erected as speedily as possible. By the third night all opposition slept in peace, and it was established that for the future, the gentle tenants of the boxes should pay their six shillings for admission, and the frequenters of the pit three shillings and sixpence each person. After a slight arithmetical difficulty, as to the amount of specie that would be required to be provided at the pit door, in which it was luckily ascertained, that three persons came to just half a guinea, and required no change; and that a shilling, added to half a crown, certainly produced three and sixpence; the new rate was found rather a convenience than otherwise. As the prelude with which the new theatre opened was withdrawn on the third night along with the disturbance, what it was about has never transpired. The influence of association is powerful over most minds; was it therefore his courage or his fears that made Mr. Harris open his expensive theatre with the Road to Ruin? Twenty-five thousand pounds were said to be expended upon this new erection; and yet when fifteen years

after, it was destroyed by fire, it was said that it could not have stood many years longer. But the mysteries of architecture are like those of its moral mimic, free-masonry, and are totally dark to the uninitiated. Mr. Pope had returned this season to Covent Garden, and the high favour of the manager. But upon his assuming Evander in the Grecian Daughter, the feelings of F. Aickin were hurt, and he threw up his engagement. A very pleasing loyal farce, called Hartford Bridge, by Mr. Pearce, was acted on the 3d of November, and was very frequently repeated.

Cobb and Storace had been again at work on an opera for Drury Lane in the Haymarket, and the 21st of November it came out under the title of the Pirates. The music was much applauded; as to the interest, it may be sufficient in "the hurly," as Shakspeare writes, to say, that Kelly, Suett, Sedgwick, Bannister, Dignum, Wewitzer, acted the parts they had been playing all their acting lives, and that Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Bland, Signora Storace and Miss Decamp, were equally fortunate. Such pieces, with us, are indeed "pegs to hang *notes* upon," a little changing the application of an ingenious pleasantry. Mr. Cobb, though a man of business, kept his dramatic carnival with great regularity, and contributed very essentially to the public amusement. In private life Mr. Cobb was particularly decorous and amiable. By the directors of the East India Company, he was always

highly respected; and they were liberal enough to think that a man might be an excellent secretary for India affairs, though he was an open and diligent cultivator of the drama. I suppose, before the Board, he must, after his operas, have presented himself like the prologue in Henry the Eighth.

> "I come no more to make you laugh; things now,
> That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
> We shall present."

I am next to notice the first dramatic offering of not merely a speaking acquaintance, but an old and intimate friend. On the 1st of December 1792, appeared the play of Columbus, written by Thomas Morton, and brought out at Covent Garden Theatre with such aids of scenery and decoration as a brilliant and foreign subject required, and the confidence of the manager in his author led him to supply. His old schoolfellow Holman is said to have taken some part of the dialogue upon him, and exerted himself in the performance with that ardour which in truth it was not possible for him to want. It is unnecessary to detail the plot of a play so well known as this; but the combination of Alonso and Cora, with the grand incident of Columbus, it should be recollected, was not caught by Morton from Kotzebue, but evinced his own early knowledge of dramatic effect. To employ the talent of Lewis was a temptation that suggested the excrescence of Harry Herbert, an Englishman

following the fortunes of Columbus. Some of his comic business seemed exotic, and transplanted from the British Isles; though a lawyer and a physician commonly find their way into every variety of climate; but I fear seldom attended with the pleasantries of Munden and Quick.

Although this piece is by no means upon a level with the maturer efforts of Morton, yet it was a highly creditable commencement, and announced a mind of which the bent was decidedly dramatic, fertile in combinations, and looking strongly to character. Authors are commonly supposed to be an irritable and usually a selfish race. It is to the credit of Morton, and Reynolds, and Holman, that their rivalry never disturbed their friendship; they commonly consulted together in their difficulties, and promoted each other's success as fervently as if they had divided the receipts.

Morton never had the industry of Reynolds, and like him had avoided the engagement of a regular profession. He had, however, a secure reliance in the liberal affection of his uncle, Mr. Maddison, and his expectations at that gentleman's death might have been realised into positive independence, had not the benevolence of that excellent man extended itself in all directions, and but little been recovered of what was lent on slight or no security. Morton, however, could wait better than his friend the temptings of a good dramatic subject, and write at leisure, when he did find himself in

the vein. Reynolds no sooner had ascertained the profits of one play, than he turned in with invincible perseverance to the composition of another, which was "no less material to him" than the former. And, in fact, in the space of twenty-four years, he produced six-and-twenty dramatic offerings, of which only four were indifferently received. Morton, in the same period of time, had written only a third part of the number. But he had more of the artist about him than his gay friend, and with better plots laid his interest deeper in the passions. He never would admit himself to be excited by any thing but the hope of gain, and always pleasantly ridiculed the ambition that looked to fame as its pre-eminent reward. It was no uncommon thing for Morton to receive a thousand pounds for a comedy; and looking at the transaction as one merely commercial, it was worth a manager's while, even at such a rate, to secure his powerful assistance. The dramatic writers of the present day, repressed by the more prominent claims of the *equestrian* order, are narrowed to a badly paid £300; or, as the spirit of some lawyer arranged it, £33 6*s.* 8*d.* for nine nights: there was a tradition, that a one-and-twentieth night once ensured a further benevolence,

> "But WHEN,
> Extends beyond their catalogue."

Mr. Kemble, as it has been stated, found himself

greatly annoyed in his management; and he attributed his impediments to the indolence, often — oftener, I think, to the yielding good humour, of Sheridan. He was, with the greatest difficulty, induced to retain his situation. Matters were carried, in defiance of his judgment, and thus there were persons encouraged to contemn his authority. I was present one night in Suffolk Street, when he denounced his fixed, his unalterable determination. He expected Sheridan there after the house should be up, and aware of the great disarming powers of the orator, in a sort of inarticulate murmur, alarmed the party with the prospect of a scene; and as some very excellent claret was near him, he proceeded to fortify himself for the engagement. At length Sheridan arrived, took his place next to Mrs. Crouch at the table, looked at Kemble with kindness, but the kindness was neither returned nor acknowledged. The great actor now looked unutterable things, and occasionally emitted a *humming* sound like that of a bee, and groaned in the spirit inwardly. Crouch whispered two words in Sheridan's ear, which let him know, I believe, the *exact* cause of the present moody appearance of his manager. A considerable time elapsed, and frequent repetitions of the sound before mentioned occurred; when at last, "like a pillar of state," slowly up rose Kemble, and in these words addressed the astonished proprietor. "I am an EAGLE, whose wings have "been bound down by frosts and snows; but now

"I shake my pinions, and cleave into the general "air, unto which I am born." He then deliberately resumed his seat, and looked as if he had relieved himself from insupportable thraldom. Sheridan knew the complacency of man under the notion of a fine figure, and saw that his eagle was not absolutely irreclaimable; he rose, took a chair next to the great actor; in two minutes resumed his old ascendency. The tragedian soon softened into his usual forgiving temper; and I am ashamed to say how late it was when, cordial as brothers, I took one arm of Kemble, and Sheridan the other, and resolutions were formed "that melted as "breath into the passing wind."

And such was the power of Sheridan upon this and every occasion. With Kemble he might be said to have a friend in the citadel, for that good man's veneration for him was extreme; and most certainly I never heard him speak with equal warmth of any other existing talent. Of politics he knew absolutely nothing; of passing events scarcely anything. Newspapers he did not read: so that when I occasionally repeated to him, what I had heard from Mr. Pitt, or read in the publications of Burke, he always recurred to his grand theme, the eloquence of Sheridan; and, as Mrs. Kemble often said, on that subject he was an inveterate idolater. Yet he sometimes threw off his allegiance. "I know him thoroughly," he said; "all his sophistry, all his paltry artifices — but I

" will become a member of his own society, the " FRIENDS of the PEOPLE; and when he rises to " speak, I'll PUT HIM DOWN." These were only the ebullitions of disappointed attachment and rooted affection; and having persuaded himself of a very extraordinary likeness that Sheridan bore to the countenance of Shakspeare, I incline to think, if Mr. Kemble had formed a scale of which the author of Hamlet was at the summit, the next degree, among the fervours of genius, would have been occupied by the author of the School for Scandal.

Upon the arrival of that intelligence, which struck every liberal mind with horror, I mean the murder of Louis the Sixteenth, Mr. Kemble properly closed his theatre. On the 24th of January, 1793, there was no play. Copied, as this atrocity was, from one which stains the annals of England, there result, from comparing the two events, some circumstances in our favour. Charles had appealed to arms — Louis was the most pacific of monarchs; and we had the decency, at all events, to let our monarch die like a gentleman. We did not force him to die a " living death" in the dirty heartless persecution of his confinement.

" Let me be cruel, not unnatural."

The Italian Opera being now arranged, and requiring possession of its own stage, Mr. Kemble and his sister, on the 26th, performed the characters of Hastings and Shore at the little theatre. This

temporary occupation of his theatre led Mr. Kemble to the knowledge of the subject Mr. Colman was now treating, and he decided that nobody should act the Octavian of the Mountaineers but himself. The effect of that determination, as it respected the play, and subsequently the friendship between the poet and the actor, shall be told in due, that is, the summer season.

That ingenious satirist, Mr. Sneer, in the Critic, gives the following account of a comedy, which he introduces to Dangle's patronage, under the title of *The Reformed Housebreaker*, and the author, it seems, had discovered, "that the faults and foibles "of society are subjects unworthy the notice of the "comic muse, who should be taught to stoop only "at the greater vices and blacker crimes of "humanity—gibbeting capital offences in five acts, "and pillorying petty larcenies in two—in short, "his idea is to dramatize the penal laws, and make "the stage a court of ease to the Old Bailey." We were making hasty strides to realise the new species of comedy. On the 29th of this month, the tragi-comedy of *Every One has his Fault*, by Mrs. Inchbald, was acted with great applause at Covent Garden. The interest here is in a Captain Irvin, who, having married the daughter of Lord Norland, betakes himself to America to repair his circumstances, and comes back desperate at his ill success. His mind settles upon suicide, and he goes to a coffee-house to commit the act; but his better

genius holds his hand, and in his way back to his lodging, he merely robs his father-in-law of his pocket-book, and a large quantity of stage bank-notes which it contains. But he is irresolute as to property as he had been with regard to life, and returns the stolen goods by a servant. The messenger, tempted by the large reward for the apprehension of the robber, first gives information as to the thief, and then himself runs away with the money. The peer is relentless, and resolves to prosecute, and the only evidence against Irvin is the pocket-book, which his father-in-law is himself possessed of. (The new court has some singular notions as to evidence.) But even this sheet-anchor of vengeance is destined to break away from him, for Irvin's son, whom he had adopted on the condition that he should disclaim his father, has the parental tendency as to pocket-books, and from motives of pure humanity brings it to Lady Caroline Irvin. He is immediately rewarded by the amazing discovery, that the wife of the robber is his own mother. Lord Norland enters, and is immoveable; the youth determines to remain with his mother. After many vain attempts to reconcile this unhappy family, Mr. Harmony succeeds by a pretended letter from the daughter, announcing her husband's death. The old blockhead repents of his cruelty, and poetical justice is achieved by a *compromise of the felony*. Whether the search after great strength of interest, such as the above, has

had a tendency to refine or debase the national taste, is a question which I have no right to determine. Pure comedy cannot be written on easier terms, than much observation of character and manners, and an elegant and pointed dialogue, if the portion of wit should fall below the abundance of Congreve and Sheridan. The German drama, however, was happily at hand to solve this and all other doubts as to dramatic composition, and settle us in a region of monstrous incidents and false morals, from which our escape is little to be expected. Satisfied with our new masters, we have learned to invent in their taste, and indeed our original productions might be almost taken for translations. The melo-drama, pure from the German, or the germanised French stages, is the principal ornament of our splendid national theatres.

Mr. Kemble always did his utmost to keep down this rage after novelty, but he found it beyond his power. Mrs. Jordan was ambitious to be written for, and not very careful as to the competence of the author. Nay, she was reported to have written herself a considerable part of the comedy of Anna, in which she made her first appearance.

This piece had been literally forced upon Kemble, and he resented it strongly. He had told the parties concerned that there was nothing in it, and that it really wasted the time employed in the rehearsals. The Jordan triumphed until the night of its appearance, the 25th of February; but long

before the fall of the curtain, the fate of her friend's comedy was irrevocably sealed. The fable was utterly without interest — the only character an amorous old mother; and the dialogue distinguished only by its vulgarity. But I have shown "a touch of Harry in the night." I have exhibited Mr. Kemble in his mood, upon such an insult to his judgment and his authority.

On the 2nd of March, Miss Decamp acted, in a very interesting manner, the character of Adelaide in the Count of Narbonne. I notice it, not because there were any indications of first-rate power in tragedy, but because there was fine deportment, good sense, and just feeling; and as she knelt before Mrs. Siddons, the illusion was perfect; she could scarcely be thought any thing but her daughter.

Mr. Boaden, in reading the Guzman d'Alfarache, or Spanish Rogue, had thought that the story of Ozmyn and Daraxa might take the form of an opera, and afford an opportunity to display the musical science of his young friend Atwood. He therefore applied some leisure hours to it, and Mr. Sheridan gaily told him, "that his songs were better "written, than any which he had read since the "Duenna." How far this compliment was justified, he has now no means of estimating. Sheridan paid him faithfully for the piece, of which the author, happy as he was, kept no copy.

Storace's benefit had the attraction of an excel-

lent farce from the pen of Prince Hoare — The Prize, or 2538. The astonishment of Bannister, when he read the letter from the lottery office — his re-commencement of the letter — his laugh — his extasy, are vivid in my recollection, and among the most amusing instances of his peculiar talent. While plain farce was permitted to hold up the train of Shakspeare and Otway, of Southern and Rowe, no farce was oftener repeated than the Prize; and Bannister with £10,000 transferring his business of an apothecary to such a journeyman as Suett, with the finished style of Storace as a singer, formed a "good night" of no very sentimental, but certainly most exhilarating character.

Mr. Kemble had a great respect for the veteran Murphy, and had looked over his tragedy of the Rival Sisters, written in 1783, and published with his other writings in 1786, but till then, as I understood him, never seen by managers. The subject is that of Ariadne supplanted by her sister Phædra, and abandoned by Theseus, whom she had saved from the labyrinth of Minos. It had been treated by the younger Corneille under the title of Ariane, and written in the short space of 40 days, in the year 1672. It should be observed that the conduct of Ariane vastly resembles that of Andromaque by Racine, in 1667, and as Voltaire wrote with so obvious a leaning to Racine, I wonder he did not point out Corneille's obligation to that fine

poet. He speaks of Ariane as one of the happiest subjects of antiquity, greatly superior to that of Dido, who has done nothing for Eneas, and is not betrayed by her sister. He throws out a careless touch of his penetration, in accounting for the success of the play. "Les hommes, tout ingrats qu'ils sont, s'intéressent toujours à une femme tendre, abandonnée par un ingrat; et les femmes, qui se retrouvent dans cette peinture, pleurent sur elles-mêmes." The famous La Champmêlé in Ariane excited the tears of Madame de Sevigné, and those of the Lafayettes of her brilliant day; and it might have been expected, that Mrs. Siddons would prove equally attractive in the English Ariadne. But attention could be secured only six nights, which I would fain not impute to any indifference to the subject merely because it was classical. In looking carefully for some cause of its slender effect, I think I find one in the unsupported situation of the heroine — she has no confidante in the English play, and consequently no obvious female sympathy. The value of such a personage is very distinctly seen in the Anna of Lady Randolph: the heroine is there reflected by a faithful mirror. Mrs. Siddons had collisions only with Periander and Pirithous in her scenes of doubt and apprehension, and the effect was hard and tiresome. The fourth act, however, had some noble agonies of tragic passion. Theseus is in truth a most contemptible scoundrel. Fate is the prin-

ciple on which he excuses his Romeo-like fickleness, and black ingratitude. This is sufficiently in Grecian manners; but should have been attributed to the wrath of some divinity. The language of Murphy is too little like common speech; he has no finely-felt yielding to colloquial terms, which leaving dignity to sustain itself, secure the effect of passion, by going direct to the heart. It was rather late, too, in his life, to compose a tragedy, and a few marks of careless diction shall be pointed out for the use of the poetical student; and an occasional happiness in thought or expression, from sincere respect to the worthy author, whom, though in his decline only, I had the happiness to know. In the 4th act Ariadne makes her exit,

> "Wild as the tempest's rage,
> As if a conflagration of the soul
> To madness fir'd her brain."

And yet the speaker fears that

> "She went to brood in *secret* — to *think*."

Surely the apprehension of her destruction was more likely, in so alarming a state of excitement. People brood in melancholy; in despair they rave, and frenzy, and destroy. In the same scene Phædra, in two following speeches, slabbers out the common place nothingness of exclamation, —

> "It is *too much*,
> *Too much*, to bear this agony of mind."

Pirithous interposes but three lines, and Phædra again rejoins her usual —

"No more; it is *too much*."

A little further on we have the misery of epithet *useless*, because previously implied —

"*Instructed* how to roll the *bidden* glance."

He deals too in perpetual *asides*. I think I never observed such a series as Phædra presents us with. Enough of slight faults.

Burke has somewhere in his works a fine passage of the approximations by which a politician finally changes his party. Murphy uses it to a noble moral purpose.

"*Pirithous*. Beware, beware of the deceitful garb
That vice too oft assumes. The first approach,
With bland allurements, with insidious mien,
Wears the delusive semblance of some virtue.
The siren spreads her charms, and fancy lends
Her thousand hues to deck the lurking crime.
'OPINION *changes*; 'tis no longer guilt;
'Tis amiable weakness, generous frailty,
'Involuntary error." On we rush;
The sophistry of vice deludes us all."

In the ravings of his heroine, he has contrived to give that aching stretch of thought incident to her feeling, a very high degree of poetical beauty.

"Or blow me hence upon the warring winds
To climes unknown beyond the verge of nature,

To the remotest planet in the void;
That never, never can approach this world;
But rolling onward, farther, farther still,
Holds in the wilds of space its fated round."

It is easy here to conceive the piercing intensity of Mrs. Siddons's gaze, as if she followed with her eye the illimitable track. I have only room for a happy remembrance of Shakspeare's arrangement in Lear — "I never gave you kingdom," &c.

Ariadne (to *Periander*.)

"Why do you smile upon me?
I never serv'd YOU; never sav'd YOUR life;
Made YOU no promise: why should YOU deceive me?"

He has another imitation of Shakspeare in Romeo and Juliet, and one remembrance of Horace and his translator, Milton. I linger over this last production of the last of the Romans. Murphy lived among us uncontaminated by our fashions, the fine old gentleman of a former age. There was something about his lofty figure, to which all classes paid respect; but his costume excited the same attention, as when, from a crowded levy, we see a gentleman in a court dress hurry through the street. His great happiness in the decline of life was, that he had assigned himself a task; and before he went to rest, something was daily or nightly to be done towards the complete translation of his favourite historian, TACITUS. Thus, though nearly left in

solitude, his solitude was never cheerless. Steevens used to annoy him by insidious attacks in the newspapers, and call upon him to see his countenance while he read them; but Murphy knew him as well as Sir John Hawkins did; though the plays of the former might not suffer so much, as the history of music, from the criticisms of the modern Zoïlus.

To the play of the Rival Sisters Mr. Kemble himself contributed a Prologue: as it was a production in the maturity of his mind, and he did not often lend this sort of aid, I shall lay it before the reader; for being written subsequently to the publication of the play, it has never accompanied that to which it forms so suitable an introduction; and very few, except his particular friends, know even that he wrote one.

MR. KEMBLE'S PROLOGUE TO THE RIVAL SISTERS.

Spoken by Mr. Wroughton.

Whene'er the poet, in retiring vein,
Proclaims his purpose ne'er to write again,
The threaten'd town interprets the kind way,
And takes an interest in his *next* last play.

Not that our bard has play'd you fast and loose,
Or pleads this general candour for excuse;
He dares not trifle with the public sense,
But thinks such folly downright impudence:
Brought, not advancing, since he then appears,
To risk the well-worn fame of forty years,
He trusts distinct indulgence you'll afford —
Not he, but Ariadne, breaks his word.

From ancient stores we take our plot to-night,
Form'd on the mournful tale of Theseus' flight;

The time, that golden Æra, some relate,
When equal Minos rul'd the Cretan state.

Hail, holy sage, who taught'st licentious man
To find his freedom where the laws began;
Whose fame in arms, redoubted from afar,
From thine own shores deterr'd invasive war —
Whilst thy mild genius o'er a prosperous isle
Gave every GOOD and every GRACE to smile;
'Till thine to all thy subjects were as dear,
As GEORGE's virtues to his Britons here.

To all our author bids me humbly bend,
But deprecate no foe, and court no friend:
With grateful pride he thinks of honours past,
And hopes you'll bid those valued honours last.
Freely to you he now commends his cause —
Should he deserve — you'll not withhold applause.

Mr. Kemble himself acted the character of Pirithous — he therefore held in his own grasp the difficult disclosure to Ariadne of the baseness of Theseus. He neither expected nor wished to make a splendid effect for himself in this play, but gave the crown to Ariadne —

"Tenues volat illa per auras."

On the 3d of April, Mr. Morris, a barrister, ultimately a Master in Chancery, whom I used occasionally to meet, brought out a comedy at the Haymarket, called False Colours. It was neatly, if not powerfully written; but his legal preferment withdrew certainly no Congreve from the comic muse. The veteran Cumberland again ventured one of

his hurried compositions, a comic opera called the Armourer; the music by an amateur. But it lived only three nights, though the names of the actors alone did a great deal for it. But Covent Garden easily repaired its failures — the activity of Mr. Harris was always provided. On the 18th, Reynolds was again before the town, with the peculiar secret *How to grow Rich*, and he cleared by that comedy 620*l*. The author now boldly attacked the fashionable *income* of Faro Banks, and the splendid *accommodations* of a well-known sheriff's officer; and frolicked his way through life, as he saw it, to the infinite amusement of the town. In the epilogue I remember Lewis produced a lady's *pad* from under his coat; and the house had been drilled into such excellent temper through the evening, that the prominence was received with convulsions of merriment. Any thing so gay, so irresistible as Lewis upon such an occasion, I have never seen.

A few farces, not worth specifying, carried the two great theatres through their season, and Mrs. Jordan acted Lady Restless for the first time, in All in the Wrong. This performance on her own brilliant night, was certainly not for her own *benefit*: she was nothing like the character. The charm of Jordan was in a sort of comic *enjoyment* of her own personal situation in the piece. But she loved to see herself in elegant comedy, and had no sort of reluctance to the tender heroines of tragedy; though she neither had, nor could assume,

the high tone of manners characteristic of the former, and still less what Racine, a fine critic as well as poet, calls "cette tristesse majestueuse," which produces our whole delight in the latter.

The Haymarket, on the 15th of June, had the good fortune to repossess Mrs. Gibbs, an actress who, by unpretending diligence and fine temper, has gone through even a theatrical life without an enemy; and, below professional greatness, been for many years one of the greatest supports of a theatre. In the recollections of my intercourse with theatrical persons, many a pleasing image rises of this kind, unaffected woman; who, with very considerable acquirements, and much accurate study of her art, is yet more admired for the cheerfulness of her mind, and the goodness of her heart.

The pen of O'Keefe has seldom been more ludicrously employed than in delineating the *London Hermit*, and his rambles in Dorsetshire. Johnstone in Tully, and his "describing book," and the "devil of a hermit," and a crowd of pleasantries, revive at the mere title of the piece; which proved extremely attractive, and ascertained that in the Irish character Johnstone never had a rival. The London Hermit was first acted on the 29th of June.

I now come to a very important feature in Mr. Kemble's dramatic life — the performance of Octavian in the Mountaineers. By whatever epithet his other characters might be distinguished, I should decidedly term Octavian the most *pic-*

turesque. The author and the actor seem to have asked themselves, how best a series of portraits of expressive misery could be diversified and arranged; and never was an author's conception more extended and exalted, than the Octavian of Colman was in the performance of Mr. Kemble. True, it occupies scarcely so much as the latter half of the play; but it bursts upon you with fine effect, after the very Shakspearian preparation of the scene between the two goatherds.

Octavian is not Cardenio — he has more of the misanthropy of Timon: the address of the latter to the *sun* perhaps suggested that of Octavian. His uniform sensibility as to woman, forms a delightful contrast with his rough and usually savage treatment of his own sex. On the sudden entrance of Agnes to part him and Sadi, Kemble's exclamation, "Woman!" was, in tone and look, a volume— his assumption of the new office of torch-bearer before the votaries of true love — his ardent look and various action, his costume, his firm step, his thrilling enthusiasm —

"O! wander, boundless love, across the wild!"

the revulsion upon the murder of his own peace — the words "and with it pluck'd out hope!" — the slight pause, "Well, well, no matter," — and the swell of his chest, and the vigorous action of his head and throat at the words —

"Despair burns high within me"—

if they have not been seen, will never be conceived, until such another countenance and person arise, to execute the fine conception of the poet. Perhaps greater effect was never produced than in the satirical scene with the goatherd — "the road to one poor ducat." The agitation and the caution in taking the picture from his bosom — the limner —

"As the dull clod unmov'd did stare upon thee" —

a bitter, lover-like rebuke of the usual absorption of artists, not in the sitter, but the picture — not the beauty of the original, but how it is to be translated into the language of art.

I am tracing the power of Mr. Kemble, and only incidentally here insist upon the poet's talent. Few men have written better than the passage upon the countenance of Roque: it is modelled after the antique, and Shakspeare would not have disdained it.

"No — Providence has slubber'd it in haste.
'Tis one of her unmeaning compositions
She manufactures when she makes a gross.
She'll form a million such — and all alike —
Then send them forth, asham'd of her own work,
And set no mark upon them."

The actor again showed his mastery in the art by the tone and manner of

"Give me thy hand, Roque." —

and the expression of hopeless sorrow, when he

faltered out "I'm past jesting with" — the interview with Floranthe — his fainting at her feet — the melancholy —

> "It has chanc'd, *before*,
> That I have dream't this—"

the hysteric laugh, and the modulation of the voice in

> "I shall weep soon, and then I shall be better."

To which should be added the characteristic glow at the last —

> "For no man else could I restrain the transport
> That gushes on my soul, when I have pull'd,
> At last, one flinty father to my feet."

I have paid my tribute, thus, to the actor's genius. As to the author, what more need I say, than that his *greatest* power is in the Mountaineers? His diction is occasionally stiffened, by what are now the expletives, *do* and *did:* — his fable is not well involved, and has no unity. His two incidents follow each other, as they do in the Sierra Morena; and upon the whole he has not business for more than his three short acts. Had he amplified his fable, and strengthened his dramatis personæ, the reign of George the Third would have produced a tragedy, which in passion and character, in sentiment and poetic diction, was worthy of the brightest period of dramatic literature.

After the complete success of the play, the rival geniuses, whose convivial were quite upon a par with any of their other powers, sat down to enjoy their triumph. Octavian on this occasion relinquished his proud boast —

" Thou hot and rolling sun, I rise *before* thee" —

for he had been many hours in his course before Kemble rose from this perfect celebration. I saw the piece several times during its run, but found little change in his manner. He had by meditation so settled the part in his mind, that the successive representations were only stronger or fainter impressions of the same design.

What remained was an affair of business, seldom pleasant. Kemble, in his love for Octavian, had sacrificed much of the usual produce of his summer. Colman could not afford the *worth* of the performance; his season was short — his receipts moderate. What he could do, he did — he proposed the following basis of settlement between Mr. Kemble and himself. " Put me as the author " of a new play out of the question. Let it be " supposed that the sole attraction is yourself. " Look then at the receipts during the whole " number of nights — by Cocker, so MUCH. Then " take a worn-out play, the ' Battle of Hexham,' if " you will, for the same number of nights — de- " duct the second from the first, and let us divide " the difference." There can be no doubt that

Mr. Kemble would have gotten five times the sum, had he listened to the offers made to him by the country theatres: but looking to his FAME, the diversification afforded by a character so peculiar, so great and original, was worth the sacrifice, large as it was, which had been made to it. Disappointment certainly was expressed upon the subject on the one part, and much regretted on the other.

CHAP. VII.

MRS. RADCLIFFE'S ROMANCE OF THE FOREST. — MR. BOADEN DRAMATISES IT. — HOW TO DRESS A GHOST. — MR. HARRIS'S RECEPTION OF THE PLAY, AND ITS AUTHOR. — NEW DRURY. — MR. KEMBLE'S TASTE IN SCENERY. — MR. CAPON SELECTED. — HIS KNOWLEDGE AND UNWEARIED PAINS. — MR. KEMBLE'S PERFECT COLLECTION OF THE DRAMA. — DRURY AT COLMAN'S IN THE WINTER OF 1793-4. — MORTON'S CHILDREN IN THE WOOD. — MISS POOLE'S OPHELIA. — HAMLET DREST A LA VANDYKE AT COVENT GARDEN. — THE PICTURES IN THE PLAY. — MUNDEN IN POLONIUS. — MR. KEMBLE IN YOUNG MARLOW. — BANNISTER, JUN. — BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE. — RICHARD TICKELL. — MRS. WEBB DIES. — MISS LEAKE. — DREADFUL ACCIDENT AT COLMAN'S. — NOVELTIES. — THE GRAND NATIONAL THEATRE OPENED. — THE AUTHOR'S FONTAINVILLE FOREST. — LUDICROUS NIGHT REHEARSAL OF IT. — REMONSTRATES WITH MR. HARRIS. — NEW EFFECT. — DRURY OPENS FOR PLAYS WITH MACBETH. — BANISHMENT OF BANQUO'S GHOST. — MR. CHARLES KEMBLE IN MALCOLM. — PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE. — THE JEW BY CUMBERLAND. — BANNISTER. — BISHOP WATSON'S OPINION OF CUMBERLAND AS A LOGICIAN. — MR. PYE. — MR. H. SIDDONS. — LODOISKA DONE BY MR. KEMBLE. — GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE. — SUMMER SEASON. — PALMER IN OCTAVIAN. — DEATH OF THE ELDER COLMAN.

MR. BOADEN had read the Romance of the Forest with great pleasure, and thought that he saw there the ground-work of a drama of more than usual

effect. He admired, as every one else did, the singular address by which Mrs. Radcliffe contrived to impress the mind with all the terrors of the ideal world; and the sportive resolution of all that had excited terror into very common natural appearances; indebted for their false aspect to circumstances, and the overstrained feelings of the characters.

But, even in romance, it may be doubtful, whether there be not something *ungenerous* in thus playing upon poor timid human nature, and agonizing it with false terrors. The disappointment is, I know, always resented, and the laboured explanation commonly deemed the flattest and most uninteresting part of the production. Perhaps, when the attention is once secured and the reason yielded, the passion for the marvellous had better remain unchecked; and an interest selected from the olden time be entirely subjected to its gothic machinery. However this may be in respect of romance, when the doubtful of the narrative is to be exhibited in the *drama*, the decision is a matter of necessity. While *description* only fixes the inconclusive dreams of the fancy, she may partake the dubious character of her inspirer; but the pen of the dramatic poet must turn everything into shape, and bestow on these "airy nothings a local habita-"tion and a name."

Notwithstanding, therefore, his alarm at venturing within that circle, which none but Shakspeare

had hitherto trodden with success, Mr. Boaden decided to make his experiment, and ascertain whether the failure of others had not proceeded from defective preparation as to the supernatural incident, or from its imperfect or vulgar exhibition. I have, early in this work, stated my opinion, that nothing ever was more tasteless than the stage exhibition of the Ghost in Hamlet. The great author has written with his highest power; he has displayed unbounded knowledge of effect; he has given to frequent repetition the absolute power of novelty; and yet, as far as the royal shade himself is concerned, all this charm is dispelled by the heavy, bulky, creaking substantiality of the spirit. Whereas the whole of this "gracious figure" should look as if it was collected from the surrounding air, and ready, when its impression should be made, to melt into "thin air" again.

Perhaps the sublimest effort of painting is the figure of the Royal Dane, as he appeared in the large composition of Mr. Fuseli for the Shakspeare Gallery. It has what seems person, invested in what seems to be armour; it bears the regal sceptre; its countenance is human in its lineaments, though it inspires more awe than mere humanity can excite. How is all this produced? By recollecting some of the known principles of the sublime. By the artifices of the pallet; by keeping down all too positive indications of substance; by the choice of a cold slaty prevalent colour, touched

slightly with the pale silvery tone of moonlight; by a step gigantic in its extent, and action of the most venerable dignity and command.

How far the author might be able to get such an effect attempted upon the stage was matter of much anxiety. He wrote his play with some care, he thinks, as to the diction (for he has never read it since); and after taking the opinion of certain friends and brother authors, he sent his work to Mr. Harris, to whom, at that time, he had not the honour to be known. It is now with a mournful pleasure he retraces the interview he had with that gentleman in the library of his house at Knightsbridge — the smile with which he first of all announced his acceptance of the play; and then the peculiar glance of thought he turned upon me, when he proceeded to rid me of some obvious encumbrances to the action, sundry useless characters, and enforced the duties of compression, or explanation, or omission — all which, he said, long experience, rather than critical study, had discovered to him. There was a benevolence, a paternity in his manner, that won my entire confidence. A few alterations I had to make, but they were easily done. The author took his play home, not *back*, and left his new friend, the manager, happy beyond measure, sure that his play would be acted in the coming season, and really but little fearing the grand ordeal of the public.

I anticipate the reader's curiosity, whether, en-

joying the honour of Mr. Kemble's friendship, I made him acquainted with the subject that now occupied me? Unquestionably I did, and he advised me to be satisfied with nothing less than a five-act play. As the subject presented itself to me, I did not see the possibility of working out the leading character to an importance worthy of *his* great talent; and as to the heroine, I had no view beyond the powers of a young actress, the wife of a friend; but all my arrangements of this kind were set aside by the policy of the theatre; the manager told me who *must* act the principal male and female of my play.

Mr. Kemble at this time did not conceal (at least from *me* he did not) that at Drury Lane Theatre "they did not want plays; the treasures "of our ancient authors were inexhaustible. Shewy "after-pieces and laughable farces might be neces- "sary; but what could be expected now in the "way of the regular drama, that previously had "not been better done?" This, to be sure, admitted of no dispute. Mr. Harris, I dare say, thought of the mighty dead with similar respect; but he acted in a way more beneficial to the living: and by steady encouragement of such talent as there was, punctual and even liberal payment, and constant vigilance and forecast, he stood against the greatest mass and variety of talent that ever combined into one dramatic company.

The new theatre was now rapidly advancing to

its completion; and Mr. Kemble's active mind had full employment in the preparations for the stage itself. As the dimensions of the new theatre were calculated for an audience, the price of whose admission would amount, even at 6*s.* in the boxes, to more than £700, it was quite clear that for all grand occasions they would want scenery of greater height and width than had been exhibited at old Drury; and that in fact but little of the old stock could be used at all. On this occasion it gives me sincere pleasure to mention the very great acquisition Mr. Kemble had met with in an old friend of mine, who really seemed expressly fashioned, as a scene-painter, to carry into effect the true and perfect decorations which he meditated for the plays of Shakspeare: the artist to whom I allude is Mr. William Capon, who has the honour of being draughtsman to H. R. H. the Duke of York. Mr. Capon, like his old acquaintance, the late John Carter, was cast in the mould of antiquity; and his passion was, and is, the ancient architecture of this country. With all the zeal of an antiquary, therefore, the painter worked as if he had been upon oath; and as all that he painted for the new theatre perished in the miserable conflagration of it a few years after, I indulge myself in some description of the scenery, which so much interested Mr. Kemble. The artist had a private painting room, and Mr. Kemble used to walk me out with him to inspect the progress of these works, which were to

be records as well as decorations, and present with every other merit, that for which Kemble was born, — truth.

A chapel of the pointed architecture, which occupied the whole stage, for the performance of the Oratorios, with which the new theatre opened in 1794.

Six chamber wings, of the same order, for general use in our old English plays—very elaborately studied from actual remains.

A view of New Palace Yard, Westminster, as it was in 1793. — 41 feet wide, with corresponding wings.

The ancient palace of Westminster, as it was about 300 years back; from partial remains, and authentic sources of information — put together with the greatest diligence and accuracy — the point of view the S. W. corner of Old Palace Yard. About 42 feet wide and 34 feet to the top of the scene.

Two very large wings, containing portions of the old palace, which the artist made out from an ancient draught met with in looking over some records of the augmentation office in Westminster. It was but a pen and ink sketch originally, but though injured by time, exhibited what was true.

Six wings representing ancient English streets; combinations of genuine remains, selected on account of their picturesque beauty.

The tower of London, restored to its earlier state, for the play of King Richard III.

The late venerable president of the Royal Academy used frequently to honour the artist with a call, and enjoy these scenes of past ages, the accuracy and bold execution of which he greatly commended. Capon, among the other able artists of the theatre, formed a distinct feature, like the *black-letter* class of a library. Such, with some modern views, were the first works he executed for the new theatre.

In our conversations, Mr. Kemble now opened to me many of the great improvements that he meditated; and notwithstanding sundry difficulties, which would not always be charmed away, his ambition rose along with the splendid pile of Mr. Holland; and the *grand national theatre* was the term that he not too partially appropriated to the edifice which Mr. Burke thought an encroachment upon the architectural majesty of our temples. Mr Kemble now steadily pursued his object of forming a complete collection of the drama — the newspapers occasionally reported the large sums given by him for single plays. It became him, he thought, to possess every thing relative to his art, and his collection, at last, was greatly superior to that of his illustrious predecessor, Garrick. To give him ample room, he had enlarged the library of his house in Caroline Street, Bedford Square. I speak of him always, I am sure, with respect — but although there was no

doubt about the superiority of the house in Great Russel Street, I yet fancied him happier in the former than the latter; there was more freedom, fewer guests, less of ceremony, and equal hospitality.

At the commencement of the winter season of 1793-4, the Drury Lane company were obliged to bend under the low roof of the little theatre in the Haymarket, and there was something *affected* in the terms by which this event was announced. It was, in short, "Mr. Colman, Jun. having made the "necessary arrangements with the *Proprietors of* "*the Drury Lane Patent*, opened the theatre on "the 19th of September *under their authority*, "in order that the public might not be deprived "of the *advantage* of an *option* of theatrical en- "tertaiment, derivable from having a *second Play-* "*house* to resort to, during the winter months." Perhaps an announcement more *cautious*, and better calculated to still the *alarm* of the Lord Chamberlain, will not easily be found. The advantage of the option too is a lucky discovery. The humility of the term, second *playhouse*, so fortunately revived in defiance of the more classical and dignified word THEATRE, must have its share of approbation.

I have already given a slight sketch of Morton, and I think just touched upon that very amiable part of his character which led him to court retirement, and to study nature in her simplest, and perhaps loveliest garb. He was not one of those

alluded to by Mr. Addison, who are unable to divest themselves of the little images of ridicule which are suggested by lowly interest unadorned by art—In common with that most elegant of critics, he had felt the powerful appeal of the ballad called "The Children in the Wood," and conceived that by saving the little innocents from the assassin, he should heal the wound he previously made, and not only keep up the interest, but render it delightful. He read his piece to Reynolds at Chambers, who admired it, and was the bearer of it to Colman; by that gentleman it was accepted, coupled with the condition, that the real author was to be unknown. It was brought out on the 1st of October, and succeeded beyond the most sanguine hopes of the parties. In this unappropriated condition, Rose used to ask how it went off, with a seeming interest in the question; Tom Vaughan did the same thing. Churchill has given the latter gentleman a lift, by making him the trumpeter to Murphy, by the name of Dapper; and he clearly had no indifference to any little fame that was floating about. For the piece itself, it was a most delicious little thing, and exhibited Bannister's genius in the happiest way imaginable. I do not know any part by which he was better appreciated, nor wherein he was more unapproachable. The scene of Walter's heroism fell into the hands of another man of genius, Mr. Westall; who preserved a very bold and perfect

resemblance of Bannister, in a composition of great interest and beauty.

Morton, I believe, never enquired what Shakspeare's cotemporary, Yarrington, had done with his fable; he was contented with the BALLAD, of which the simplicity, I think, is rather the result of *imitation*, than poverty of poetical sentiment and expression; particularly, if the office of the *Robin* be imitated, as, I confess, seems probable, from that of Horace's *doves*.* In stating this to be my opinion as to the *Children in the Wood*, I take the opportunity to extend that opinion to many a ballad, written, as I conceive, in the most poetical age of our literature, and affecting occasionally the "silly sooth" of traditional expression.

On the 9th of October, at Covent Garden Theatre, Miss Poole, whose fame as a singer was afterwards carried very high indeed, under the name of Dickons, made her first stage appearance in the character of Ophelia. The lovely maniac's "snatches of old lauds"† were on this occasion augmented by

* "Till Robin-red-breast piously
Did cover them with leaves."—*Ballad.*

"Fronde nova puerum palumbes
Texere." HORACE, Ode IV. b. 3.

† This passage is a lively instance of the little taste which has been exerted in the composing a text of Hamlet from the old 4to and the folio 1623. Shakspeare wrote very evidently *lauds*, as the quarto proves; *i. e.* she *chaunted* old *hymns*: nothing can be more regular. The easier, or more common word,

the grand cantata "Mad Bess." But Hamlet, on the present night, received a complete dressing in the taste of Vandyke, and has ever since been fixed in costume of black satin and bugles. A new mode of treating the pictures of the late and the present King of Denmark, though applauded by certain critics, was unquestionably wrong. The late king, called the "poison'd prince," was a *half*-length on the wall, and the present, a miniature worn by her majesty as a bracelet. Now the words, "*a station*," prove the figure to be standing, as Mercury would do, darted down as a herald, and alighted on a lofty eminence. The usurper stood, too, but how? "Like a mildewed ear" of corn, unsightly by the side of one springing up in purity and perfection. The two pictures should be *whole* lengths, the constant furniture of royal apartments, and thus incidentally supplying to Hamlet a powerful, obvious, and undeniable illustration. However, the royal painter of the court of Denmark must have been a man of primitive sincerity, indeed, to allow the *living ass* to figure so "vilely" by the side of the *dead lion*. The name of the jester on that establishment is happily come down to us; but of the portrait painter we are quite ignorant. Munden, in Polonius, said, I remember, *beatified* Ophelia, in-

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tunes, is a very imperfect substitute. To chaunt old tunes is literally omitting all *subject* in the melodies. LAUDS should, therefore, be restored as essential to the *meaning* of this tender account of Ophelia's last moments.

stead of *beautified*, and was reproved for his innovation; but he had seen it in Theobald, who started *beatified*, because he thought it more consonant with the other terms applied to Ophelia by Hamlet, "the celestial," and "my soul's idol." Nay, he has assigned, too, a reason, why Polonius called it a *vile* phrase, namely, that, as a catholic, he deemed it prophane. Of this emendation Warburton approved, and, I half suspect, had forgotten that it was his own. Of such trifles more, perhaps, than enough;—but when the actors offer their correction to me politely, as the Witches did to Macbeth, with a

> "Say, had'st thou rather hear it from *our* mouths
> Or from our MASTERS?"

I answer always, like the monarch, "Let me see THEM."

Mr. Kemble, on the 15th of the same month, acted, for the first time in town, the part of Young Marlow, in that most improbable of all comedies, "She Stoops to Conquer," and surely it must be "meat and drink," indeed, to see a clown, when such a booby savage as Tony Lumpkin can entertain a civilized assembly.

There was an idle notion once, it appears, "that the profligate man, who is at ease with a strumpet, is *abashed* in the society of virtuous women." To have lost the *relish* for goodness is incident to all perseverance in vice: but Marlow is a gentleman and a scholar, who, however incredible the fact, is

paralyzed by a silk petticoat, and can neither see nor hear, feel nor comprehend, when he is compelled to stand in the presence of a young gentlewoman.

Such is his disorder, that Miss Hardcastle trusts her *natural* manner in her second dress; and although in her first she literally exhausts herself in brilliant attacks upon Marlow, yet he is quite insensible of the identity. In the Belle's Stratagem, Miss Hardy adopts a total change of voice and manner, in addition to which precautions, she wears a mask, and Doricourt has some excuse for his want of suspicion. Marlow is represented as having neither ear nor eye in the first interview: to call any thing Miss, deprives him of his senses. He swallows, too, the extravagant fiction of Lumpkin, and takes Mr. Hardcastle's house for an inn, as if he were as little conversant with gentlemen's houses as with modest women; and is rude and violent in a just proportion to his sheepishness and timidity.

When we sometimes suffer pain from the tremendous critical inflictions of Dr. Johnson, we cannot forbear a degree of astonishment, that he could ever be brought to countenance Goldsmith's comedies; and, one would think, he must have walked out of the theatre, could HE have either *seen* or *heard She stoops to Conquer*. The advantage taken of some sentimental comedies, to impress upon us the notion, that this was the "*real* Simon Pure," was well sustained by the Johnson Club, but Garrick did more than all of them together, in his most for-

tunate Prologue, spoken by Woodward, in deep mourning, one of the happiest approaches in the world to such a structure.

The difficulty once got over, opposed by Kemble's fine intelligent countenance, and Young Marlow being completely out of his "five wits," nothing could be better than Kemble in the character. I have spoken with great freedom of his comedy; but he acted this part quite as whimsically as it has ever been done.

Bannister, on the 29th of October, acted, for the first time, the character of Col. Feignwell, in the comedy called *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*. His success in the part kept the play upon the stage for a series of years; and it not only took its turn with the *Busy Body* and the *Wonder* of the ingenious author, but it became the constant substitute when any great card failed to play in Drury Lane Theatre.

Richard Tickell, as having, like Sheridan, married into the Linley family, and being also the author of an opera, claims some notice in this place. If he really was a descendant from the Tickell of Addison, the genius of the family, and perhaps more than its genius, had degenerated. Richard has, among the collectors of political *jeux d'esprit*, the fame of a lucky *anticipation* of parliamentary oratory. He was fortunate in one friendship, to which he owed a pension and the appointment of a commissioner of the stamp duties, and the apartments

in the palace of Hampton Court, from the window of which he, I fear, threw himself, on the 4th of November, 1793.

The allusion to his illustrious namesake reminds me of the highest ploratory verse in the language; I allude to the lines on the death of Addison. Dr. Johnson thinks the lines upon Cato *skilful;* and I venture to produce his comparison of the illustrious Roman with the aged oak, either as to form or influence, among the most unaffected and happiest efforts of poetry.

> " The aged oak, thus rears his head in air,
> His sap exhausted, and his branches bare;
> Midst storms and earthquakes he maintains his state,
> Fixt deep in earth, and fasten'd by his weight:
> His naked boughs still lend the shepherds aid,
> And his old trunk projects an awful shade."

If he be the real translator of the rival version to Pope's first book of Homer, I can only say that, in the transfusion of Homer, he stiffened his verse, beyond all parallel in his original compositions.

In the passage through our stage seasons, not very often distinguished by genius of our *own* times, I feel happy to select, not, I hope, obtrusively, beauties that must be of ALL times, and which uphold the poetical character of my country.

The stage this year sustained a *heavy* loss in the death of Mrs. Webb. It is perhaps mortifying to a woman ever personally to excite laughter — a huge hill of flesh surmounted by a front of a fiery

fretful expression, and bellowing forth a voice scarcely susceptible of a minor key, is altogether a compound so unsuited to delicate minds, that there should be rich compensation in the genius for the pain ensured by the appearance. In many instances this has decidedly been the case. The class of nurses, Heidelbergs, Malaprops, and Cheshires, has been, from Mrs. Green to Mrs. Davenport, admirably filled.

A very amiable girl and most pleasing singer, Miss Leake, acted Rosetta, at the Haymarket, for the first time, on the 21st of January, 1794. She was a pupil of Dr. Arnold's, and calculated exactly to succeed Storace in English opera. But, after every prospect of the most brilliant success in her profession, she was compelled to retire from it by one of those insurmountable attacks upon the organ of execution, which diminished the volume of voice, narrowed its compass, and rendered it feeble and untrue.

On the 3d of February, at Colman's theatre, an accident happened absolutely unparalleled as to its magnitude among the casualties of the playhouse. Their Majesties had graciously condescended to enjoy an evening's amusement, with such accommodation as could be given in the little theatre, and they commanded (a rare occurrence) three farces written by one gentleman, Mr. Prince Hoare, — "My Grandmother" — "No Song no Supper" — and "The Prize."

The opportunity of having so near a view of the royal party rendered the pit an object of particular choice, and an immense crowd was collected in the Haymarket before that *only* entrance to it, and when the door was at last opened, the rush was terrific and overwhelming. If it had been a straight passage, some persons might have suffered from pressure; but here was, by a fatal mistake in the builder, an unguarded and rather precipitous staircase of about sixteen steps to descend, and the loss of footing by one person produced a succession of falls from the pressure behind; and the crowd continued to spring upon and trample their fellow-creatures, lying suffocated below. Fifteen persons lost their lives on this melancholy evening. In the only case where animation suspended was at all restored, the recovery was baffled; the gentleman died. Eight of the sufferers were females of great respectability in life. It was rather remarkable that, of the males trampled to death on this occasion, two were heralds — Benjamin Pingo, Esq. York Herald, and J. C. Brooke, Esq. Somerset Herald. There were about twenty other sufferers, from bruises and fractures of the legs and arms; and some of these died.

Their Majesties were kept uninformed of the accident until the entertainments of the evening were concluded. But it made, I know, a deep impression upon their minds; and they commanded a very minute report to be made to them, as to the

sufferers and the condition of their respective families. In the course of the evening, upon entering the box lobby, I found a dismay, a consternation so generally diffused in the house, that there must have been singular precaution, at many points, to prevent an appearance of some alarm about the royal boxes.

There were at Covent Garden Theatre some novelties, which met with various success. Mr. Holcroft had a comedy called Love's Frailties, which had one slight defect, namely, that it was written with the impassioned philosophy of the new school, and the hope of urging on the demolition of rank and title, then so happily consummated in France. The very prologue, of which part was the suggestion of Mr. Thelwall, evinced the tone and temper of the piece, in a couplet, by the author's own instruction, thus appropriated:

THELWALL.—"Or running footmen" (*happily completed by*)
HOLCROFT.—————"sent with hoop and hollo,
Types of the VAPID THINGS that are to follow."

In the play itself, the preference given "to the "artist and the tradesman over that *less useful* "and *less worthy* personage," who it should be remembered *employs* them, alarmed the GENTILITY of the audience, and such *frailties* in the author were pronounced incurable on this side the grave! Bate Dudley's opera, the *Travellers in Switzerland*, by the dexterity of the whole business, was as suc-

cessful as any thing of that sort can be — good music and good scenery operating upon inoffensive matter, suggested by a mind of singular adroitness, and usually with great certainty attaining its object. The fable was a puzzled skein not worth unravelling, though part of it winds through an enchanted castle, in the fashion of that day. Dudley was somehow a sure card. Nor was the Haymarket without an amusing comedy at this season from the pen of the veteran Cumberland, called the Box-lobby Challenge. The title had no great propriety, if I remember; but it was fortunate one way, it secured a very sportive epilogue from the younger Colman, containing the preliminaries of a shop-boy duel. The Hon. Fr. North wrote a prologue, of which the point was to compare other people's plays to other people's children, always insufferable except to the parents. He has seldom succeeded better than in the present sprightly versification. This comedy, though not written with the full power of Cumberland, had attraction of a cheerful cast, and was well received.

On the 12th of March the town was at once astonished and delighted by the opening of the new Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Its spaciousness was entirely sunk in its lightness and proportion. Had I the construction of twenty theatres, this should be their model. It seemed to grow out of the pointed architecture, from its effect; though its parts did not imitate that mysterious order, or

perhaps disorder, of composition. Why, *since*, theatres have affected so solid an inside front, it were perhaps fruitless to enquire. As to their exterior, convenience is the only principle that is imperative in such piles; and that, consequently, has been put out of sight altogether. The carriages have hardly any space to move in, and the audience are exposed to the wet, as speedily as possible, on their leaving the lobbies. The exit doors are still too few.

The oratorios were naturally well attended; and the coup d'oeil of the orchestra, piled up in Capon's actual building of a Gothic chapel, magnificent and even sublime. The house was at once ascertained to be a fine musical structure; and when applied to its positive purposes, with a company upon its stage seldom equalled and never surpassed — with all the leading beauties of England at the head of the polite, the liberal, the intelligent public — again, I say, our dear Kemble's heart might swell with pride at being manager of such a theatre.

I am brought back to the rival theatre, by being myself selected to supply part of the means by which Drury Lane was to be opposed. I have already ventured, some pages back, to interest the reader in the discussion, how the supernatural may best be exhibited upon the stage: and I, at the same time, showed that the author of Fontainville Forest meditated some improvements which were sug-

gested to him by the sister art of painting. How far the stage execution might correspond with his notion was matter of experiment. A ludicrous misconception of his instructions might have ruined his whole design. Perhaps the reader may find some amusement in the *miseries* of an author. The great contrivance was, that the spectre should appear through a blueish-grey gauze, so as to remove the too corporeal effect of a 'live actor,' and convert the moving substance into a gliding essence.

As, to speak the absolute truth, any great effect in this play depended on the management of the ghost scene*, Mr. Harris ordered a night rehearsal of it, that the author might judge how happily the stage had seconded his conceptions. Mrs. Pope had charmed us with the pathos of her recitation — the entrance of the spectre approached. On came good, honest, jolly Thompson, "in his habit as he "liv'd," with the leathern pilch, "time out of "mind the player's armour" — as thick nearly as he was long, —

> "And over all, that he might be
> Equipt from top to toe,
> His *grey gause* VEIL, as buckram stiff,
> Right manfully did throw."

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* "Why should your terror lay my proudest boast?
Madam, I DIE, if I *give up* the GHOST."
Author's Epilogue.

No; never, except a river god in some procession, with all his *sedge* about him; never did I behold such a figure! I was rivetted to my seat with astonishment. Mr. Harris, who sat in the front by my side, said he thought the effect very good. But not staying to dispute this opinion, I made no secret of my distress and alarm; and clearly explained to him what my own idea really was. He laughed heartily at the mistake, and we soon found, across a portal of the scene, a proper place for the gauze worn by old Thompson. The clumsy effect of the traditional stage armour he did not so soon admit, and asked at last, rather briskly, how it could be made better? I told him that, in the first place, the present ghost must be *laid*, and a much higher spirit be invoked; and at length we found the tall, sweeping figure, that was to freeze the spectator with horror, in the person of Follet, the clown so royally celebrated for the eating of *carrots* in the pantomimes. Follet readily agreed to lend his person on this momentous occasion — his stride might have delighted Mr. Fuseli himself — his figure was of the heroic height — his action whatever you chose to order. But notwithstanding all these requisites for the part, there occurred one formidable difficulty. The ghost had but two words to utter, "PERISH'D HERE:" — now "that "will be exactly the case with the author," said Follet, "if *I* speak them." The fable had taught

every body, that though the animal might be concealed, the *voice* would betray him. We therefore settled it, that, in imitation of the ancients, he should be only the MIME, to make the action on the stage, and that poor Thompson, disencumbered from the pilch of the Majesty of Denmark, should yet at the wing, with hollow voice, pronounce the two important words; to which the extended arm of Follet might give the consentaneous action.

All that remained now was to dress the spirit; for which purpose I recommended a dark blue grey stuff, made in the shape of armour, and sitting close to the person; and when Follet (of course unknown) was thus drest, and faintly visible behind the gauze or crape spread before the scene, the whisper of the house, as he was about to enter, — the breathless silence, while he floated along like a shadow, — proved to me, that I had achieved the great desideratum; and the often-renewed plaudits, when the curtain fell, told me that the audience had enjoyed

"That sacred terror, that severe delight,"

for which alone it is excusable to overpass the ordinary limits of nature.

For a whimsical dilemma that occurred, I may be excused in speaking of myself. I can only add that the public was extremely indulgent to my effort, and that I found the author's receipts very considerable indeed.

On the 21st of April 1794, Drury Lane Theatre, erected as a proud monument to the fame of Shakspeare, was opened for the performance of plays. With the declared intention to devote the pile to his honour, it might have been advisable to delay two days for the object of commencing on the bard's birth-day. Saint Monday, however, carried it with the treasury, and Wednesday lost the honour and the coincidence. I never yet was able to get any extraordinary honours paid to this day, though the poet also died upon it; and yet, heaven knows! if the proprietors of theatres were to be estimated by what they write of Shakspeare at the bottom of their play-bills, not even Schlegel himself by "taffeta phrases" could more mystify his excellencies.

Mr. Kemble opened with Macbeth, and with his sister in the Lady displayed the utmost perfection of the art. I have long since exhausted the subject; and, along with my ever-lamented friend Opie, preferred the *proper* presentment of Banquo's spirit to his banishment. I have proved the poet's own notions by his own directions, preserved in the folio 1623.* And as Macbeth never till then was submitted to the press, it avoided all the chances of corruption, from numerous impressions, edited carelessly, if edited at all. Nor could this particular play have suffered by *frequent* transcription in

* "Enter the Ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeth's place."

the playhouse itself: it was written subsequent to the accession of JAMES, and printed from the prompt-book of the very theatre for which it was written, and of which the author was a proprietor. It was therefore acted, at first and after, as Shakspeare himself *directed*. This one point well cleared and put at rest, the question that remains is, with regard to our modern notions, whether it is not more advisable that Macbeth should *fancy* the dreadful visitor, than that the assembled court of Scotland should be conceived incapable of seeing, what the audience, as well as Macbeth, perceive to be a ghastly body sitting in the royal chair?

The same critics who banish Banquo from the feast, applaud the banishment of the *dancing spirits* during the dream of Queen Katharine. Before confirming their decree, a judicious spectator would ask, what there was in the vision, that a man, with the knowledge of D'Egville, would not render a source of even sublime and beautiful embellishment? Look at the effect of these circling and ascending spirits in Mr. Fuseli's picture of that scene, (where he has used Rembrandt with great skill) — I say boldly, that the stage is competent to all HIS effect, and *more*. In the mean time, the reader is referred to the description of the scene as originally written; and he may thence conceive a higher gratification than one of Handel's songs, sung by a Miss Anybody in a modern frock, trying to disturb, rather than assist, the last slumbers of the dying Queen.

To close with Macbeth — On this occasion Mr. Kemble allowed his brother Charles to appear in the character of *Malcolm;* and, with a love for him that has rarely been equalled, compelled him to acquire the art, by passing through its gradations. It is to the credit of that gentleman, that he submitted implicitly to his brother's judgment; who bespoke my attention to him early, by saying, "Boaden, you will see shortly two young men in "the profession, in whom I take an interest; one "of them is my brother, Charles: HE will make "an actor." The other person alluded to, in his time, I have no doubt, *made* many an actor, for he possessed the theory of the art in great perfection; but in his own efforts he certainly confirmed the unfavourable judgment, which *privately* had been given against him.

It might perhaps have been expected that Sheridan would open his new theatre with verse of his own; but General Fitzpatrick, with some French leanings as to our irregularity in the drama, closed about fifty lines, spoken, I remember, by Kemble, with the prediction that Britons, through many a distant age, should hail the founder of our drama!

> "And from the cavils of pedantic spleen,
> Defend the glories of their Shakspeare's scene."

George Colman got up a pantomime epilogue most gaily for Miss Farren; who shows off the new

theatre, in the style of a noble lord's housekeeper. In obedience to her wand, the reservoir rushed forth, to prove that the audience had *water* to dread rather than fire; and should even the *scenery* take fire, an *iron curtain* would instantly drop between the conflagration and the audience. All this nonsense had proceeded from engineers, who could find inventions, while managers could find money; and were caught at by the latter, to make a strong effect upon the public mind.

Except as to panic, fire can do nothing in theatres, where every eye is open and every hand ready to extinguish it. As Shakspeare himself expressed it,

> "Through NIGHT and NEGLIGENCE such fires are spied
> In populous cities."

And, when they are, what security is found in reservoirs without water, and iron curtains that would soon be fire heat in a conflagration? The watchman, too, like other mortals, drowsy, if not absolutely sleeping, by degrees remitting his search upon having so constantly found all well, is at the critical moment terrified beyond his reason. All becomes alarm, noise, hurry, and the struggle to save individual property; and the "court and "guard of safety" is speedily a mass of flaming ruin. However, for the present, founded, as they expressed themselves, upon a rock, guarded by science, and confident in their immense attraction

of every kind, they must be allowed to feel their triumphant security, unchecked by our fatal knowledge of what fifteen short years were to bring to pass.

One of the first and best novelties produced in the new theatre was the comedy of the Jew, written by Cumberland. That ancient people had been rather scurvily treated by either the political or literary world. Their wealth, a distinction which they owe to themselves, subjects them to hatred for its use, and to pillage on every indecent pretext. Even Shakspeare, who has made his Shylock triumphant in his logic, and affecting in his misery, seems to enjoy his defeat by a quibble, and his conversion by a halter. But this ill-used people, on the 8th of May, had the satisfaction to see their benevolent feelings admitted by a great nation, and Sheva pronounced at least as natural a character as Shylock. I hope the gratitude of Duke's place now compensated the failure of the author to move the Lords of the Treasury. Bannister merited a statue for the very able performance of Sheva; though, subsequently, Cumberland used to talk of Dowton's as the finest acting in the world.

The Epilogue, spoken by Miss Farren, set out with great pleasantry on the *origin* of woman, but dwindled away its point, and ended hardly intelligible. The *Jew* became popular all over these islands; and, except the *Wheel of Fortune*, is clearly the best of Mr. Cumberland's latter pieces.

I dined with him at Bannister's; and found him a little open to pleasantry: he sported parodox upon parodox — "Handel was no composer," — "It was "quite impossible for any man to reason, without "depth in • mathematical science," and so on; but his own attainments were to be measured, one day, by the contemptuous logical restriction of Bishop Watson.

"I had too great contempt for his powers of ar- "gumentation to answer anything he published "against me: he had merit as a versifier and a "writer of essays; but his head was not made for "close reasoning. 'There are,' says Locke, 'some "men of one, some of two syllogisms, and no more, "and others that can advance but one step fur- "ther. These cannot always discern that side on "which the strongest proofs lie.' Mr. Cumber- "land was at most a two syllogism man."—*The Bishop's Life*, vol. i. p. 124.

• See, however, on this subject the admirable discrimination of Warburton, at p. 19. of the Introduction to his Julian, 1751. "It may seem, perhaps, too much a paradox to say, that long "habit in this science *incapacitates* the mind for reasoning at "large, and especially in the search of moral truth. And yet, "I believe, nothing is more certain. The object of Geometry "is demonstration, and its subject admits of it, and is almost the "only one that doth. In this science, whatever is not demon- "stration is nothing; or at least below the sublime inquirer's "regard. *Probability* through its almost infinite degrees, from "simple ignorance up to absolute certainty, is the *terra incog- "nita* of the Geometer. And yet here it is that the great busi- "ness of the human mind is carried on, the search and discovery "of all the important truths which concern us as reasonable "beings."

At the other house, a tragedy in three acts, called the Siege of Meaux, from the pen of the laureat, Pye, was acted, on the 19th of May, with applause. It must not be confounded with the celebrated and terrible siege of that place, in 1421, by our hero, the Fifth Henry. It is narrow in its business, and of little interest, written with great purity, as was to be expected, being the work of so eminent a scholar. It is often extremely painful to be obliged to remind a man of genius and learning, that every profession must be learned; and the great effects of the drama can only proceed from intimate acquaintance with the stage. The drama, by its occasional profits, tempts beyond the other walks of literature: a successful play producing, by less than 100 pages, a reward beyond quartos of historical research and painful elaboration. But Pye, though even the author of an epic poem, was not at all turned to tragedy.

Mr. Henry Siddons, the son of the great actress, had dramatised the Sicilian Romance of Mrs. Radcliffe, and he allowed Middleton to act it for his benefit, on the 28th. He had learned, at all events, to "shape his ends" dramatically, and the work was creditable to his industry.

Mr. Kemble had been amusing himself by translating, from the French, a musical romance, called Lodoiska. There is a bustle about it that will always interest strongly: it seems to have been the model of all the fortresses subsequently stormed. Kera Khan and his Tartars — Princess Lodoiska,

Count Floreski, with flaming walls and delightful music, mixed excellently well together, and brought a *mine* of wealth into the theatre. Charles Kemble took a young Tartar, called Kajah, under that greatest of Tartar chiefs, Barrymore; and worked every night like a Turk, to come at last into broad day-light. As Drury Lane Theatre had commenced its operations late in the season, it did not close them until the 8th of July, having, however, on the 2d, acted the Country Girl, with Jordan, for the benefit of those who were left desolate and destitute by the glorious deaths on the 1st of June. Cobb, one of the ready writers of that day, put a little afterpiece together, in which everybody acted, and with the immense resources of the new stage, a sea-fight was given, in which a seaman might find something to admire. To this piece, called *The Glorious First of June*, Richardson wrote a Prologue of great beauty, which Mr. Kemble himself spoke. The points were frequent, and yet graceful.

> "No: every eye, in generous drops bedew'd,
> Shall own that bounty here is *gratitude*."

The appeal to the gallant spirits, who had sealed, with their blood, the safety of their country, was extremely eloquent — *e. g.*

> "If of your former being ought survive,
> And memory holds her *dear* prerogative."

But the strong point was in the surprise, when the great hero himself was named:

> "Glory itself at such a shrine may bow,
> And what is glory, but a name for Howe?"

I only add the dexterous union of the victors and the public —

> "They, who have *won* the laurel — You who *give*."

Surely conviviality had few more accomplished victims than Joseph Richardson.

The summer theatre was now to do its best to compensate the want of Mr. Kemble in Octavian. The young manager had been indecently accused of predilection for his own pieces. I should call it rather attention to his own interest. His productions had a decided fashion about them, that did not attend those of his cotemporaries; and I know that he never refused his stage to a novelty of decent promise. The Mountaineers was of necessity to be played, though the delightful Octavian could not sacrifice any more time to its performance in town. I saw Mr. Palmer in the character. Though not naturally a tragedian, he was an able actor — he had energy, he had pathos — he had a fine, yet rather full, figure; but his countenance, though handsome, was not marking; and his attitudes, though bold, were not picturesque. His appearance indicated nothing of solitude and distraction, and blighted hope. He was a living contradiction in terms, and his Octavian implied a miracle.

There was yet another important substitute this season, Fawcett for John Bannister, who went to Liverpool. Much of Bannister Fawcett could not touch — age must be given to the character to force out the *pathetic* that was in him. His humour, too, did not seem to spring from *flight*: — absurdity looked *considerate* in Fawcett. But Colman soon found out his peculiar force, and wrote for him admirably. The attention of this worthy man, and able actor, was always unfailing to every duty of his profession.

In the midst of the son's triumphs as a writer, the elder Colman was drawing to the close of an existence suffering under mental alienation. After the termination of his season, in the year 1785, he had gone to Margate, and was there affected by palsy; but it was not until 1789, that any disorder of the intellect became apparent. He was reduced to a condition of nervous imbecility; and died at a house in Paddington, under proper care, on the 14th of August, aged 62.

Mr. Colman was born at Florence, where his father was resident for his Britannic Majesty; and this procured the honour of a royal godfather, in the person of King George the Second. His mother was a sister of the Countess of Bath. He received his education at Westminster and at Christ Church, Oxford. He took his degree of Master of Arts on the 18th of March 1758, and brought out his first farce in the year 1760. School friend-

ships are often decisive of future engagements. The associate of Lloyd, Churchill, and Bonnel Thornton, was infinitely more likely to become a *connoisseur* than a lawyer. The *Jealous Wife* proved him to possess the very highest power as a comic writer; his *Terence* established his fame as the neatest of all translators. By the deaths of Lord Bath and General Pulteney in 1764 and 1767, he found himself in circumstances, vehemently to be desired by all followers of the muses. His taste led him to the theatre; and he purchased first into Covent Garden, and finally into the Haymarket. The numerous productions of his pen are before the public, and will long remain so: he collected even his fugitive pieces, and was sufficiently alive to his reputation as an author, to think of correctness even in trifles. As a critic, he had that integrity of judgment which leads to the exact truth; while spirits equally, perhaps more, subtle, fly often away after hypotheses, useless and untenable. His achievement as to the epistle of Horace AD PISONES has had the highest praise. His skill in the Latin language was particularly acknowledged by Dr. Johnson. He lived in the full affluence of fame, beloved by the greatest and the best of men, till a cloud gathering in the decline of his course, he was covered from our view, and shortly after sunk below the horizon.

CHAP. VIII.

MR. HARRIS RESTORES A ONE SHILLING GALLERY. — HOLCROFT'S PRELUDE. — MRS. DAVENPORT. — REYNOLDS, THE RAGE. — MR. KEMBLE ACTS PUBLIUS. — BADDELEY'S DEATH. — MRS. ROBINSON. — HER COMEDY OF NOBODY. — AUTHOR'S ACQUAINTANCE WITH THAT LADY. — VARIETY OF NEW PIECES. — MR. KEMBLE REVIVES ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL, AND MEASURE FOR MEASURE. — DEATH OF THE ADMIRABLE PARSONS. — MR. KEMBLE, WITH D'EGVILLE FOR HIS BALLET-MASTER, GIVES THE SPLENDID PROGRESS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT. — MR. KEMBLE'S PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE. — NOVOSIELSKI DIES. — FIRST LOVE. — MR. BOADEN'S SECRET TRIBUNAL. — WANT OF HELMETS. — ZORINSKI. — MRS. S. KEMBLE. — THE KNIGHTS. — MISS MANSELL. — CUMBERLAND'S HURRY. — REYNOLDS'S SPECULATION SUCCEEDS. — MR. KEMBLE ACTS ALEXANDER. — COOPER FAILS IN MACBETH. — DAYS OF YORE. — HOLCROFT'S MAN IN TEN THOUSAND. — MORTON'S WAY TO GET MARRIED. — NOVELTIES. — IRON CHEST.

THE merits of our stage architecture are discernible at first sight; a *second* usually dispels the charm. Covent Garden had recently cost a large sum, to be rendered perfect. A shilling gallery had been left out of the original plan, but was

placed at length so as to render the gods invisible to men below. Indeed, those far-seeing powers had no common obstruction to their own view. "Phidias," says the great lecturer, "had discovered "in the nod of the Homeric Jupiter the character- "istic of majesty, *inclination of the head:* this "hinted to him a higher elevation of the neck "behind, a bolder protrusion of the front, and the "increased perpendicular of the profile." All these sublime arts had in vain been practised by our theatric gods: for any earthly enjoyment, they might as well have been in heaven, as where they were. Now, however, by cutting away a painted gallery, the shilling was permitted to see the stage: indeed, the whole cieling was new. The frontispiece also a new one. The former column became a pilaster. The general character of the house was a fawn colour, with green and gold pannels. The cappings of the boxes were of green morocco leather; the seats stuffed of the same colour. The seats through the whole house were raised. Behind the curtain some red borders were soberly changed for green, and the machinist, an ancient as well as modern divinity,

"Namque erit ille mihi semper Deus,"

obtained more room for his operations. Conscious of all these improvements, Mr. Harris got Holcroft to scribble a prelude for him, called the Rival Queens; in which, perhaps without design, the su-

perior title was attached to the other house—Queen Covent Garden, *Empress* Drury. The head tire was equally unfortunate, for the former bore the *Piazza* upon her crown, and the latter wore the cupola surmounted by *Apollo*. If Kemble had desired a symbol of difference between them, is not this precisely what he would have chosen?

On the 24th of September that excellent actress, Mrs. Davenport, made her first curtsey at Covent Garden; and from that time to the present has remained one of the most diligent and diverting performers that ever amused the public. Mrs. Green was rather cooler; but Davenport *flaming* in the front of Lewis, Quick, Munden, and Fawcett, was a meteor of infinite value. The comic *harmony* of all their tones was really past belief. Miss Wallis, in October, returned to this theatre in Imogen, considerably advanced in talent, but retaining all her native retiring modesty.

Reynolds's comedy, *semper eadem*, as Mr. Harris used to tell him, was as like in its success as in its structure or characters. *The Rage* fortunately was supposed to be personal — Old P.'s were taken for old Q.'s — a boxing Peer was properly named Savage: and the husband of a celebrated singer was as decidedly exhibited under the name of Cygnet, as Flush might stand for any one of the tribe of money-lenders. Seduction, disguise, disinheritance, adoption, are the nerves which support him through his five-acts; whimsical incidents,

practical jokes, and very sparkling dialogue, render his plot of no great consequence — amusement constantly attends him, and every body who wishes to be amused. It is almost a fortune to give, to such an actor as Lewis, the name of Gingham. But Reynolds passed his whole time in *thinking* comedies; and only lived by writing them. He was so popular, that he had all the gay world running after him; and the grave preferred their exhilaration to their criticism.

Mr. Kemble's decided pre-eminence in the *Roman* character, makes it necessary to record his performance of Publius, in the play of the Roman Father, on the 15th of November, — Mrs. Siddons was the Horatia. As this people aimed to be superior to the sympathies of nature, they excite little natural sympathy. In France at this time every thing was Roman, even to the style of a wig. Delation arrived at a climax among the mimics, from which I believe the savage originals themselves shrunk — and children denounced the aristocracy or federalism of their parents, and were applauded for their VIRTUE!

The stage suffered a considerable loss on the 20th of this month by the death of poor Baddeley. On the evening before, he was seized with a fit, while dressing for Moses in the School for Scandal. He was taken home to his house in Store Street, and every effort made to preserve him, but he lived only to the next day. His Swiss and his Jews,

his Germans and his Frenchmen, were admirably characteristic — they were finely generalized by Baddeley, and played from actual knowledge of the people, not from a casual snatch at individual peculiarities. Baddeley left money for a dramatic mass to be said for him for ever, in the green-room of Drury Lane Theatre. Baddeley's *cake* and Dogget's coat and badge, constitute a fame, from which the merits of the actor are said to shrink. The gift of Baddeley keeps his name with good taste in the mouths of the profession of which he was an ornament; and there certainly would be more of such memorials, but that the successful are willing to forget their humbler rank, and those who fail, in their decline have nothing to bequeath.

No season presented more indifferent pieces than the present — they departed usually like the shadows they were. Among the sons and daughters of disappointment was that very amiable unfortunate Mrs. Robinson. A perfect martyr to the rheumatism; the use of the lower limbs quite gone; carried from room to room, or from her house to her carriage like an infant; she yet had the nerve to control her bodily sufferings, so as to indulge a constant use of the pen, except at the periods of refection and exercise. Among the numerous trifles that soothed her lonely hours, was a comedy in two acts, entitled, *Nobody*. I remember the warmth with which she chaunted the kindness of Mrs. Jordan in accepting the principal character;

and I cannot forget the way, when the storm began, in which the actress, frightened out of her senses, "died and made no sign." Mrs. Robinson at the time lived in St. James's place, and very unaffectedly entertained the few literary friends she had. She was delighted in the opportunity it gave her of hearing all that passed in the world, and of mingling in the conversation her full share of intelligence and grace — she still *sat* a remarkably interesting woman, and disdained to intrude upon conversation any evidence of pain actually suffered at the moment. So that at the jest of others, and sometimes during her own repartee, the countenance preserved its pleasant expression, while a cold dew was glistening upon the forehead. Sheridan very often looked in for an hour in the evening, and on this occasion had to endure the eloquent indignation of his fair friend. She certainly considered herself ill used, and MEEKY, as he used ironically to call her, made her attacks rather powerfully. But I have before described the manner of Sheridan. It forms no part of my design to indulge the appetite of scandal, and most assuredly this lovely woman had severely expiated the errors of her early life. The respect of the liberal part of society she always retained during the period when I had the happiness to know her. Her father, Captain Darby, had been intimate with mine, and I had heard of the childish graces of MARY from a most benevolent man, no bad judge

of merit, whom they had entirely captivated. She spoke remarkably well, and with a depth of tone somewhat remarkable. She was conversant with the French, Italian, and German literature, and had a facility of composition almost approaching to that of Mrs. Cowley.

I am led by the date, as well as the allusion just made, to notice next, a comedy produced on the 6th of December, called *The Town before You*. What it wanted was some one leading interest. It had not been well considered; the subject had been rather created by labour, than suggested by fancy; and the play was withdrawn to be altered, a fruitless process. Cobb's Cherokee, at the other theatre, never returned into the treasury the expence of getting it up. In its cast it had prodigious strength, but it was inferior in power or good fortune to his other operas. Andrews, perhaps assisted, brought out at Covent Garden what was called, erroneously, a dramatic tale of the Mysteries of the Castle. But *Mysteries* were very far indeed from the touch of the writers; and taking the name of Montoni from Udolpho, and the name only, they fabricated a non-descript of every sort of absurdity; and having long debauched the public taste, succeeded perhaps beyond expectation, — certainly beyond desert.

Mr. Kemble had revived two of Shakspeare's comedies this season, with his usual care—*All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*. In the former he condescended to Bertram; in the latter he acted the Duke with a dignity, a venerable pro-

priety, and picturesque effect never surpassed. The Isabel of Mrs. Siddons was a model of cloistered purity, and energy, and grace. I clearly never have seen a more perfect delineation. When she afterwards read the play in public, she projected this character rather beyond the rest, perhaps more from the habit of acting it herself, than any designed departure from the equality imposed by reading.

Among the greatest losses, which the stage of my time has sustained, is most unquestionably to be classed that of William Parsons, on the 3d of February 1795. He had all his life suffered from asthma, and it terminated his existence in his 59th year. Parsons was born on the 29th of February 1736. His father was a builder, who lived in Bow Lane, and his son in consequence profited by the education of St. Paul's school, at once the nearest and the best. His father, properly looking upward for his son, designed him to be an architect, and therefore, after grounding him well as a classic scholar, placed him as a pupil to Sir Henry Cheere. Here he cultivated the fine arts assiduously: he mixed landscape with architectural designs, and painted flowers with great success. For his amusement he painted occasionally through life; and he illustrated from his early profession when speaking of the stage. He would say of any crude unstudied performance, "Sign-post daubing!" Parsons first acted Kent, in King Lear, and felt his way for some years in the profession, till, being invited from Edinburgh by Garrick, that great

master led him ultimately to what he was fitted for by nature; and some hardnesses being rubbed down, a strong tendency to grimace confined to occasional sallies, and above all things, at last measuring and waiting the proper moment of effect, and being rich enough in expression to keep the spectator in waiting, and happy to wait, he threw in his heightening touches into the living composition before you, so judiciously and irresistibly, that he became the master of his audience, and his rivals alike. But I have long since endeavoured to paint this great and unrivalled actor, to whom we are indebted for many delightful hours of relaxation in our passage through life. His last performance was Sir Fretful Plagiary, in the Critic, on the 19th of January 1795. From his arrival at Drury Lane Theatre, in 1762, to his death, he had never quitted it, nor would he be tempted by the strongest offers that could be made, when his earliest friend, and almost brother, Powell, went to the other theatre. This principle, so honourable in itself, so advantageous to the community, so conducive to the perfection of the art, must be again *revived*, or the stage will lose its legitimate fame of good acting, and exist only by a series of contemptible tricks. This subject is not below legislative interference.

"A nation's TASTE depends on you;
Perhaps a nation's MORALS too."

On the 6th of February, a grand-daughter of the illustrious Dr. Arne came out in Gay's Polly. She had sweetness and taste, an interesting figure and countenance, and indeed every requisite but force. In a room, I heard that she was delightful.

D'Egville, whom I have always thought the greatest artist of ballet in England, being allowed full latitude at the new theatre, produced his most triumphant work, the *Progress of Alexander the Great*, a spectacle worthy of Greece in all its glory. Mr. Kemble had now realised his plan of acting the sterling old plays with a perfection never before attempted; and of directing the appetite for noise and show to objects, in which the refined taste found even superior gratification to that enjoyed by the crowd, for whose amusement they had principally been designed. I was now very frequently with him, and know the great pains he took with the character of *Penruddock*, in the Wheel of Fortune. It came at length upon the stage, on the 28th of February, one of the most perfect impersonations, that had ever excited human sympathy. He had fashioned every sentence of the part to his own organs, so that it seemed a decided reality; and his personal manner was so little disturbed, that the spectator, by an easy delusion, almost fancied that Mr. Kemble was relating some striking misfortunes that had happened, in early life, to himself. I most seriously affirm, that, for *identity*, Penruddock would hardly admit of competition.

Here, from the great intimacy between us, he advised with me as to the plain and almost quaker attire he wore; and I saw in his walk, and occasionally in his countenance, the image of that noble wreck of *treachery* and *love*, which was shortly to command the tears of a whole people. He had a habit, by intense meditation, of working himself into a character which he considered important, and calculated to diversify the usual range of his performances. Penruddock merited his pains.

As the architect and scene-painter of the Opera-house, in which Mr. Kemble had acted, he regretted the death of that gentlemanly man, Mr. Novosielski. He was born at Rome in the year 1750; and, when Wyatt was engaged upon the Pantheon, and required the assistance of a young man of genius, Dr. Freÿ named Novosielski to go over from Rome to England for that purpose, which was completely answered in his diligence and skill. Novosielski, though at that time under twenty, was almost a victim to the severity of his application. He died on the 8th of April, at the age of 45, in the Isle of Thanet; and I believe his children are yet living among us, highly respected for merits congenial with those of their parent. A few days only are past since a pupil of his mentioned him to me with great feeling.

Cumberland with, if not his utmost power, yet with great care and feeling, had constructed a

comedy on the sentimental subject of First Love, and Mr. Kemble brought it out on the 12th of May. It had the good fortune to combine the talents of Miss Farren and Mrs. Jordan. The interest is of this kind: — Lord Sensitive having gone through the ceremony of marriage with Sabina Rolet, an emigrant at Padua, yet abandons her and addresses Lady Ruby. In the mean time, Frederick Mowbray, who had originally been attached to her Ladyship, has become so interested by Sabina, as to offer her his hand. Lady Ruby, in the graces of Miss Farren, assails the reason and the conscience of Lord Sensitive so forcibly, that he resolves to acknowledge Sabina, and seek her in Italy without delay. The journey is, however, rendered unnecessary by that lovely and persecuted creature's being in the very house of Lady Ruby; Frederick recurs joyfully to his passion for Lady Ruby, and *first loves* are rendered triumphant through the whole drama.

The reader sees, that all this is elegant and well mannered, and judiciously entangled. He need not question the melancholy music of Mrs. Jordan's voice, and he may always rely upon the accomplished energy of Miss Farren. Palmer acted ably and carefully, as he had a real pleasure in scenes that combined him with Miss Farren; but Wroughton, in such characters as Lord Sensitive, had a merit quite peculiar to himself; and without

elegance of person, and with a small style of features of no very refined expression, seemed so absolutely in earnest, that he banished all notion that he was acting; and, to the extent of his powers, has never, I think, been equalled. It may look like minute criticism; but it is of importance as a lesson in the art, to say, that Wroughton's unsophisticated manners left his deportment entirely at its ease; and he was the only stage gentleman, whom his *arms* did not embarrass — he wore them always where they should be.

On the 3d of June, a second tragedy from the pen of Mr. Boaden was acted, with applause, at Covent Garden Theatre. It was called the *Secret Tribunal*, and founded upon the romance, by Professor Kramer, called Herman of Unna. A critic of that time was pleased to write of it, that "the "successive scenes were awful and impressive;" that "the characters were drawn with a bold and "spirited hand, and the general effect such as the "author certainly intended." I can hardly be expected to dispute so favourable a sentence; and yet, if the writer of it be living, which I cannot know, I shall amuse him by saying, that I now think I ought to have done more with the subject; chiefly in the way of *preparing* a strange and unheard of institution. The author of the romance had three volumes to work out his interest, and unfold his terrors. I had occupied but 70 pages in

conducting my play to its catastrophe. Shakspeare nowhere is more truly an artist, than when he throws in a scene of simple interlocution between two nameless lords, or gentlemen, or peasants, by which his leading characters are saved unnatural explanations, and his audience are fully aware of the scope of the serious business to come. But I had the fine notion of a regular play before me; and, I see, left every thing rather touched than explored; and even the *passion* of the scene too sudden and evanescent, to cling about the heart and intimately control the feelings. My charming friend, Miss Wallis, gave to my heroine, Ida, every captivation of form, and delicacy, and fervour. But the resources of the stage were reserved for melo-dramatic objects; and though the terror of the scene depended completely upon the judges being unknown, and therefore sitting with their helmets closed, I could by no means relieve the tribunal from the hereditary gowns and wigs, which "*dis-figured*" rather than "presented" what was designed to be awful. I wanted the worthy knight of La Mancha to furnish my secret judges with his *pasteboard* supplements to the simple casque or morion. As no such Quixote could be found in the MANAGEMENT, my tribunal sat muffled up in their cloaks, as if they had been dressed by the undertaker, rather than the armourer of Wirtemberg. My play was exceedingly well acted, and Lord

Loughborough had the condescension to let me know, through Miss Wallis, that he had been interested by my management of the subject.

On the 9th of June, the little theatre in the Haymarket opened with a prelude called *New Hay at the Old Market*. Colman knew that the public is never *obliged* by its own accommodation; and that they were quite ready to indulge in a laugh against the undertakers of new theatres and the authors of successful plays; so he let his fancy loose upon the great houses, and Mr. Cumberland, who had recently, at all events, done much for one of them. Sheridan was a little hurt by this warfare; and used to talk of the stable-yard he had in the Haymarket; — that he would build a summer theatre opposite to the little man, bring his Drury Lane company to act against him, and *shut him up*. The HAY-MAKER knew too well the *diligence* of his great opponent, to be much in fear of him; and as to Cumberland, his *sincere* admiration of any writings but his own was a point equally well known — so he continued in his course.

Morton had now acquired confidence enough to own *Zorinski* as his production at once; and on the 20th of June it was received with great applause. Barrymore, by a constant attention to Kemble, was become a steady tragedian; rather vehement than energetic; but by no means ungraceful, and fully to be relied upon. To him the real hero of the piece was entrusted; for as to Casimir, the king

of Poland, though the interest centers in him, he is but at one time the prey of conspiracy, and at another its bane, and villany drops its dagger at the feet of the milder virtues. The play was diversified by scenes of comedy and music, and composed in three acts, upon the declared summer model. Morton did not write his serious scenes in blank verse; and when Sheridan came afterwards to dress up Pizarro from the German, he also kept to a poetical prose, which allowed of greater freedom, and consequently more variety in the expression. To possess the full power of blank verse, a long habit is essential, without which it is never sufficiently broken to be natural; and is, in fact, a series of lines elegantly modulated to one tune; from which rhyme seems to be unaccountably withdrawn.

The little theatre had suffered greatly by deaths and desertions, this the first season on the manager's own account; and he was reminded, very illiberally, that his father in *his* first season had the following names in his company:—Foote, Henderson, Parsons, Edwin, Palmer, John and Robert, Baddeley, Bannister, Digges, Aickin; Miss Barsanti, Miss Farren, Mrs. Hunter, &c. &c. The "sweet remembrancer" would have eternally obliged the younger Colman, if he had added the information where such a company was now to be collected. Bannister, emboldened by his Sheva, on the 3d of August ventured upon the Jew that "Shakspeare

drew,"— he left the fame of Shylock, where it will ever rest, upon the memories of Macklin and Henderson. Mrs. Stephen Kemble had really done every thing of consequence this season, and Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons kindly acted Douglas and Lady Randolph, for her benefit. It was not till the close of the season, the 2d of September, that *The Three and the Deuce*, by Prince Hoare, could be got ready for Bannister's exhibition of the three Singles. It will always be the vehicle of the theatrical Atalls; who, like Bottom, are for acting Pyramus, and Thisbe, and the Lion also.

The winter season of 1795–6 commenced at Covent Garden, by additions to the company. The *Knights* succeeded to Edwin and Mrs. Wells in *Jacob* and our *Bridget*, in the Chapter of Accidents. Mr. Knight also acted Skirmish in the Deserter; he was a just, critical actor, and literally analysed a part in the most scientific margins that a playbook ever displayed. His wife was the sister of Miss Farren, and had a *strong* resemblance of the beautiful countenance of that delightful actress. She, however, remained at an immense distance from her powers in the art.

Cramer's sister-in-law, Mrs. Serres, made a rather successful appearance in Rosetta; her science was indisputable, but she huddled her dialogue together with the usual impatience of singers, who seem to disdain all effect that is not musical.

On the 8th of October, a young lady, named

Mansell, of a respectable family in Wales, made her debût in Sophia, in the Road to Ruin. It might, in most cases, seem a hazardous, and in many a hopeless undertaking, to come to a town like this, unaided and alone, and secure not only an engagement, but inviolable respect, by no overpowering talent, but by the mere unpretending possession of good sense, cultivated manners, and a pleasing person. This was, notwithstanding, achieved by the present Mrs. Reynolds. On this occasion, I avow the most decided partiality. The experience of her virtues, for a long series of years, renders me happy in devoting a few lines to the praise of one of the best and most amiable of women.

Cooper, an actor, I believe, instructed by Holcroft, appeared on the 19th of October, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the character of Hamlet; but, to repeat a former expression, he left the part with Henderson or Kemble; for anything rational, *in my time*, never dreamed of a third.

Mr. Cumberland had done recently so much, that I suppose five weeks were as long a period as he allowed to the composition of a comedy. On the 20th of this month he occupied Drury Lane stage with a thing called The Dependent. It was not suffered to linger in its uneasy station, but was brushed away on the first night.

Reynolds was certainly never guilty of this hurry in composition; he usually occupied six months upon a comedy; and on the 7th of November

brought out his *Speculation*, which amply succeeded. Here we had the King's Bench, and some of its customary tenants, men of *project*, without principle. Tanjore, in the hands of Lewis, was rendered extremely fertile of amusement — he dissipates a fortune, which is easily done, by gambling in the west; and what is not quite so easy, or at all events so usual, goes to the east without bettering his condition. He escapes from a gaol in India; and on his return to England, being out of suits with fortune, is arrested at the suit of a tailor. But rich relations being always within the *fancy* of an author, Tanjore, by a fortunate arrival, is rendered happy in all his objects. Miss Mansell acted in this comedy with great zeal.

The extraordinary preparations that were made by Mr. Kemble for D'Egville's grand ballet of Alexander the Great, like a skilful general, he converted to some of the purposes of playing; and accordingly, on the 23d of November, he revived Lee's Rival Queens, and himself performed the Macedonian Hero. It is recorded of Betterton, that in his old age, struggling with the gout, and with a figure rather encumbered and never approaching to the heroic, he yet by the fire of his imagination, and the music of his declamation, so fascinated his audience, as to render the rival of Achilles peculiarly his own. When it is remembered that he played the character in the cast court dress and voluminous wig of some noble, and that

he must have looked in his habit like King Arthur in Tom Thumb, some astonishment is excited, that our ancestors could endure a costume so absurd and so utterly false.

Mr. Kemble was a genuine Greek in his appearance, and in the prime of life, with infinite ardour and activity, afforded, perhaps, as much truth in the part of Alexander as the stage can ever know. You might easily credit the hero's devotion to Homer, when you saw Kemble. The Iliad seemed to be the source from which his mind was nourished; and the passage of the Granicus, as described by Lee, hardly exceeded the terror he inspired. They who love battles upon the stage saw now the perfection of such things.

At Covent Garden, on the last day of the month, Mr. Cooper attempted Macbeth; but he was obviously then defective in the very nerves of tragedy. He had no dawn of the poetical feeling, and did not quite drop to what is called the *natural* of acting. I heard, with pleasure, that in America he became, by great application, a judicious and valuable tragedian.

On the 13th of January, 1796, Mr. Cumberland was again upon the boards, with a serious piece called *Days of Yore*. The interest is in the pretended idiotcy of Voltimur, the son of Hastings. This character is exhibited with great success — disdaining all treachery, he delivers his great enemy, Alfred, without knowing him, declaring at the same

time, that were it Alfred himself, his conduct would be the same. The great king rewards him by obtaining for his saviour the hand of Adela, though it had been pledged, by her father, to another. Pope, in Voltimur, acted with great energy and feeling, and encreased his claim to the honours of tragedy. Mrs. Pope still retained the youthful heroines of those who looked beyond the surface. Cumberland had long written for her.

Mr. Kemble certainly did not spare himself, as an actor, for the toils of management. He accepted the principal character in a comedy called *A Man of Ten Thousand*, which was produced on the 23d of January, written by the other Mr. Endless — Holcroft. He had here got a useful fable to embody, and meditated a striking lesson in the *Timon* of comedy. Dorrington has a profuse turn of mind, keeps a splendid house and table, and entertains all those, who will gratify vanity by indulgence at its cost. But the arrival of a man of the name of Hudson, from the West Indies, with a story of a tornado, which has demolished the plantations of Dorrington, leaves him speedily to solitude, and the ingratitude of his former guests. However, the poet of the day disposes of fortune literally upon her *wheel*, (that of the lottery,) and bestows a £20,000 prize upon Hairbrain, who bought the ticket itself out of the bounty of Dorrington. Hairbrain, or, as I should write it, Harebrain, has the heart of generosity to compensate for his levity;

and therefore flies to the relief of his patron; but fortune had settled the prize *unshared*, and Dorrington learns, that Hudson's news was entirely unfounded. The joy of this event took from the poet all power of arranging the yet unavoidable nuptials of Dorrington and Olivia. The piece did not take greatly.

On the same evening, at the other house, Morton produced the first of that series of pleasant comedies, by which the author and the theatre so considerably benefited. The expense of their production was trifling; a scene or two to be painted or altered, and a few smart coats and waistcoats. My readers all know, that I allude to that most agreeable mixture of the serious with the comic, called *The Way to get Married*; the plot of this play is rather loose, and the author has disclaimed all unity of design. His interest lies in a variety of distinct circumstances, combined sometimes rather forcibly, but always of consequence enough to move with pity or laughter, as his contrast requires. He gives himself a projector to cool down; selfishness to chastise; laxity of principle to be reclaimed by generosity; and filial piety to reproach, by unmerited consolation, the conscience of an erring parent. All this is achieved with great dexterity, in language usually energetic, or pointed, or gay, perhaps rather suited to the stage than the closet, as a play made to be acted rather than read. Its success was unbounded, and no theatre in these

kingdoms was long without *The Way to get Married.* It is no very great improbability, that at one hour, in some one evening of the week, the whole play-going part of the community of Great Britain, through all her cities, were applauding the work of Morton.

On the 2d of February, the good fortune of the Covent Garden manager sent him a farce, called *Lock and Key*, written by that genius of *entertainments*, Prince Hoare. The effect of Munden in Old Brummagen, and of Fawcett's story in Ralph, kept the house in a state of unceasing laughter; and here again the manager was not obliged to *buy* his audience.

The Plain Dealer of Wycherley was revived by Mr. Kemble on the 27th of this month. His Manly yields in comedy only to his Penruddock. It is singular that our critics upon this play should turn only to the Misanthrope of Moliere for points of imitation; and not perceive the use that a man of the town, like Wycherley, has made of Shakspeare himself. Manly, Fidelia, and Olivia, are in the exact relative situations of Orsino, Viola, and Olivia, in Twelfth Night: the only difference in the treatment results from the *manners* of the authors or the times. Wycherley turns the purity of his model into profligacy; but both the Olivias are equally captivated by the female nuncio in male attire; and the Fidelia and Viola are equally in love with the Manly and Orsino of the two comedies.

The Plain Dealer was beautifully acted upon the whole; though Bannister felt what it was to succeed Yates in Jerry Blackacre. Mr. Kemble, on the present occasion, was quite enchanted with the melody of Mrs. Jordan's speaking voice in Fidelia; and expressed himself whimsically, I remember, in the language of Sterne's Sentimental Journey. The reader may indulge his fancy in appropriating the passage.

Mrs. Goodall played the disgusting profligate Olivia, and her maid Lettice was given to Miss Mellon. Mrs. Hopkins had all the Blackacres in fee simple.

The power displayed by Colman in the Mountaineers had led the patentee of Drury Lane Theatre into a negociation for a play with music, with a character written expressly up to the talents of Mr. Kemble; and it was stipulated that the author was to receive a thousand pounds for an attraction of such importance. In his summer prelude he had treated the great theatre with contempt — but nothing could be more obvious than the fact, that, as a manager of a theatre, one line of policy may be necessary; and that the mere author is a "chartered libertine," who may carry his commodity even to his managerical enemies. Colman had been struck with the strength of the incidents in Godwin's Caleb Williams, and was then quite indifferent to its political tendency. Innocence, persecuted by power, and a chivalrous honour con-

ducting to the most atrocious baseness, were incidents of sufficient interest to furnish a play; and if poor Larpent did not, or could not, see the libellous mischief of the whole business — how it endangered all that ennobled our nature, and sullied the purity even of our tribunals, — why then he was as a licenser more than "sand blind, high "gravel blind," and the state must run the peril, which its dramatic guardian of the night did not apprehend. I never knew how the author of the romance vindicated to his own candor the choice of the name of FALKLAND for so accomplished a villain as his victim of a high sense of honour.* The pure and unsullied adherent of Charles the First merited at least an abstinence from *his* name on this occasion, even as a man of principle, acting, as the author might think, in error. But I take the liberty to say, on behalf of this high sense of honour, that it could not have been so wounded at all by the infliction of *brutal* violence. The first question that an honourable, highly-cultivated spirit

* On this occasion my heart and head equally recognise the propriety of quoting, perhaps the sublimest passage in the works of Bishop Hurd, an allusion of the great Platonist, More, to Falkland, Hyde, and Chillingworth.

"O! profane not the glories of immortal, though successless virtue, with such reproaches. Those adored names shall preach honour to future ages, and enthrone the majesty of virtue in the hearts of men, when wit, and parts, and eloquence, and poetry, have not a leaf of all their withered bays to recommend them." DIALOGUES, p. 36. ed. 1759.

would have asked was, whether the offender stood within the lists of gentlemanly appeal? If he did NOT, he would leave the laws to avenge their violated peace. The strength of ONE brute would have moved our genuine Falkland, no more than the KICK of another; and assassination plunged him below his rival; inasmuch as it was more ferocious violence, equally remote from chivalrous principle, and a more outrageous violation of the laws. Thus all his crimes and his sufferings are made to reflect upon a principle, from which they never could spring, and the GENTLEMANLY FEELING is assailed, in consequence of actions which a gentleman would never commit.

Colman found in Gilpin's Forest Scenery some poachers, and other persons of a picturesque cast, that enabled him to compose a picture as though some anachronism had combined Salvator Rosa with Spagnoletti. Storace, poor fellow, sang the last melancholy breathings of his spirit upon the present occasion, to complete the gloomy work, from which so much was expected.

On the 12th of March it was produced, and found to be heavy, and insufferably long. Every disaster had attended its progress. Its author was too ill to attend its rehearsals; and nobody would *venture*, for him, to cut away those excrescencies, which that very useful critic, a stop-watch, must necessarily have pointed out. In addition to all this, his great actor was himself as ill as the part

he played is stated to be; and we all know, that spirits *worn down by indisposition* are, and must be, unequal to the display of the fierce struggle of the mind forcing an emaciated body into action. It is a call upon the actor for all the energy he *can* have to be at his command, checked and kept down occasionally by exhaustion and remitting vehemence. I have said this, because it was absurdly enough stated, that Mr. Kemble's own illness assisted him in the just exhibition of Sir Edward Mortimer. As, for many reasons, I paid the greatest attention to this performance, I must be allowed to say that, skilful as Mr. Kemble was in *lulling* and *stifling* his cough, he was THAT night too ill, to do more than walk through anything. He ought by no means to have brought out the play, whatever the treasury required. When a crowded audience, in full expectation, is teased rather than delighted, it fastens upon a harmless levity, as often as a tiresome solemnity, in the declaration of its displeasure. Old Adam Winterton, a sort of superannuated *Vellum*, in the Drummer, felt their displeasure on more than one occasion; and though the part was beautifully acted by Dodd, it put the whole play in peril, to produce him on the stage. There was a great deal of very perfect acting in the piece — Wroughton's plain country-gentleman, Fitzharding, was admirable. Bannister's Wilford was full of nature, and at times terrific. Miss Decamp stamped upon Judith an impress, that has

lasted, in stage prescription, as the only, because true, mode of exhibiting a variety of Amazons, quite unconscious of such an origin. Of the music, the opening *glee* will not easily be paralleled; and the *dialogue* and *chorus* have great merit; but the *finale* seemed built upon the idea of surrounding seraphs whispering peace to a departing spirit.

The author was severely annoyed by the treatment of his play, and wrote a very angry preface, which the *good-humoured* world valued at a GUINEA! and though it has been long omitted, I should yet be afraid, in a sale-room, to mark the comparative prices of the Iron Chest *with* the bloody knife of the author's vengeance, and of one *without* it. Among the very unusual things in this play is a passage describing some of the antiquarian pursuits, which were attributed commonly to the great actor: the anticipated application of them, I fancy, *diverted* the author too much to allow him to question their delicacy or wisdom.

> " Edward is all deep reading, and black letter;
> He shews it in his very chin. He speaks
> Mere dictionary; and he pores on pages
> That give plain men the head-ache. ' Scarce and curious'
> Are baits his learning nibbles at. His brain
> Is cramm'd with mouldy volumes, cramp and useless,
> Like a librarian's lumber-room."

The object of all this is not in the *play*. Mortimer is no such person. The " black-letter" was in

daily use in his time, and long after. The "scarce "and curious," too, of the library wanted TIME, to become "baits for learning to nibble at." It is obvious *modern* satire, and, where it stands, is an anachronism. I heard this, at the time, from one person interested in the play; but it was certainly not Mr. Kemble; who, I verily believe, would have spoken the lines, had he found them in his part, so perfectly insensible was he to what the multitude might think of him or his pursuits. With a very sincere regard for both these gentlemen, I yet determined, that it would be unmanly to avoid the subject altogether. Mr. Kemble never replied to the preface *himself*; there were, perhaps, too many, eager to thrust themselves into the order, which the French, with characteristic equivocation, call *avocats officieux*.

Mr. Colman brought out his play at the little theatre, and certainly established there, that the *most* vigorous health was required to sustain the almost infernal agonies of the hero. Never did any actor in my time make such dreadful exertions as were made by Elliston, then in the vigour of his youth, and in the command of a voice unequalled, perhaps, in power. I remember well the effects he produced; he will forgive me, but the *melancholy shade of original greatness* was not there; the *fiend-like composure of calculated falsehood*, and the internal struggles of *not quite annihilated principle*, were not to be seen, as a palsy upon the countenance,

that should have awed by purity and beauty. No; these were only to be found in the art, or wonderful expression of Kemble. So identified, I may say, was he with Sir Edward Mortimer, that, if his voice had utterly failed him, and he had been merely able to *act* and *look* the part, he would have conveyed a more graphic exhibition of it, than all the actors from 1796 to the present hour have been ably to supply. But it was quite impossible for the play to recover itself at Drury Lane Theatre. Some years elapsed, I believe, without the least approach of the parties to reconciliation; and Mr. Kemble himself told me, that such a thing was impossible, and I must leave it where it stood: however, to Lord Mulgrave and to Frank North, he at last yielded up the point; the parties met, "wine "exerted its natural power upon dramatic as well as other kings;" and he, I am quite sure, excused what was *too gross* in the attack, and at all events *unjust* to his talents, by considering the usual irritability of authors, and the absolute injury of his own unlucky indisposition. Mr. Kemble knew, too, that he had really taken very great pains in the preparations for this play, and studiously decorated it with all the *truth* of scenery that the studies of Capon could supply. It would be folly to ascribe these aids to any other taste or zeal than those of Mr. Kemble. The artist invariably worked by his instruction. For Vortigern, let me say, he only *altered* two scenes. For the Iron Chest, he executed *an ancient*

baronial hall, the architecture of the times of Edward IV. and Henry VI. The *library* of Sir Edward Mortimer, from the most perfect specimens of the Gothic in existence. The vaulting of the groined ceiling, taken from a part of the beautiful cloister of the monks of St. Stephen, Westminster; the very book-cases had similar antiquity and beauty.

CHAP. IX.

MR. KEMBLE IN VORTIGERN. — SHAKSPEARE PAPERS. — SOME NATURALLY EXPECTED. — AT LENGTH STATED TO BE DISCOVERED. — TERMS AS TO VORTIGERN. — MR. KEMBLE'S OPINION. — SHERIDAN'S. — IRELAND'S HAND-BILL. — VORTIGERN, HOW CAST. — SPEECH IN IT. — CONSEQUENCES. — CANDID REMARK AS TO THE AUTHOR. — LORD SOUTHAMPTON'S AUTOGRAPH.

WHILE Mr. Kemble thus suffered in the opinion of an *able* man from his indisposition, during the the first night's performance of the Iron Chest, he was shortly after to bear, from an *impudent* one, the imputation of having played the critic, when he should have acted Vortigern, and by downright treachery producing the damnation of Shakspeare himself. For many reasons the reader will require an account of this affair from ME; and the transaction is of too much moment to be slightly handled in any work that embraces the business of the stage. I shall, therefore, preserve all that is material in an attempt to palm a series of forgeries for the genuine writings of Shakspeare; and show how much probability aided the contrivers of the papers

in the sacrilegious imposition, which would have placed the tragedy of Vortigern among the works of our greatest poet.

It was a subject of infinite surprise to the admirers of Shakspeare's genius, to observe from age to age, that while discoveries, very material to our knowledge of the period in which he lived, occasionally occupied the press, yet that with respect to himself little could be known; and all the effusions that friendship or business must have poured from his pen during a town life, and the reasonable produce of his retirement from a mind so essentially active, ALL, as if collected together and in one mass destroyed BY AUTHORITY, had vanished away, and were entirely lost to posterity. This wonder was encreased by our knowledge, that he had neither lived in obscurity nor died in want, but that the general love and admiration had constantly surrounded him; and that individual importance might best indulge its vanity by showing the communications of his esteem, or the private treasures that might remain with his family, of which there was a natural and even learned guardian in his son-in-law, Dr. Hall.

Family papers have become a very interesting and valuable feature in our literary stores. In none such is there any fragment of Shakspeare. He had been patronised by Elizabeth and James, by Essex, and Southampton, and the two Pembrokes; had lived in the closest intimacy with Jonson and

his friends; and yet not a single letter can be found subscribed with his name, nor one tributary effusion of his muse to show that he ever yielded to the NOT idle habit of congratulating success, and soothing the disappointment sometimes of cotemporary genius. Every probability, therefore, drew the conclusion, that the task of *collection* had by some affectionate hand been duly made; and that, perhaps, in *our* times a rich assemblage of Shakspeare papers would start forth from some ancient repository, to solve all our doubts, and add to our reverence and our enjoyment.

In this state of very reasonable expectation, the public is at length gratified to learn, that this precious repository has at last been found; that it contains a miscellany as rich and various as his genius — now sublime, now sportive; now dramatic, now critical — relics even of his person and his dress — his hair, his rings, his portrait, and his books, and plays of which the number was not at once ascertained; BUT a tragedy called, *Vortigern*, was certainly there, perfect and excellent, as the great national theatre would shortly feel by the immense audiences it would be sure to collect, when acted by so accomplished a company as was now under the management of Mr. Kemble. The terms agreed upon between Sheridan and Richardson on the one part, and the father, Ireland, for the son, then a minor, on the other, were that £300 should be paid down; or, in the Drury Lane

mode, notes given, at short periods, payable at Hammersley's; and this sum was, at all events, got by the forgery. The other part of the agreement was a division of the receipts (after deducting charges) for sixty nights! None of the parties seemed to entertain the slightest suspicion, that the piece *might* fail. Mr. Ireland, in his Confessions, has reported that Sheridan was by no means an enthusiast as to Shakspeare; yet that, upon reading a few pages of the manuscript he was going to buy, he was struck with some unstrung lines, and crude passages, as below the general character of the poet; but, as the inferiority might proceed from his youth, he still relied in the fullest confidence upon the external evidences of paper and ink, and the character of the penmanship.

As to Mr. Kemble all this time, his opinion, as one of the most correct of our Shakspearians, was little regarded. He had by no means a mind easy to satisfy on such a question; and very frequently expressed to me his wonder, that Sheridan should have troubled himself so *little* about Shakspeare, when he really was a greater master of Spenser, than any other reader of the present day. I have myself heard him recite passages of great length and beauty; and his fondness for that poet, which began in his youth, originated, I think, in some such accident as that recorded of Cowley. He had whole cantos of the Faery Queene by heart.

From the beginning of the *invasion* upon Shak-

peare, Mr. Kemble had borne "a wary eye" upon the combatants; and he was duly informed by me of the successive *arrivals* from IRELAND, and of the reported conviction of certain venerable critics of the greatest name and authority. But his friend Malone had some strong suspicions, I believe, beyond *poetical* character; and neither he nor Steevens would go to Norfolk Street, for the purpose of inspecting the papers. Mr. Ireland could not be expected to concede to the two commentators the royal prerogative of being waited upon in their palaces of Hampstead and Queen Ann Street with the manuscript; and so converted the implied contempt of their refusal into a conspiracy against Shakspeare *himself*, unless he made his appearance under their own guardianship.

But to Mr. Malone I am confident Mr. Kemble owed that present of Hæmony, which kept him from the slightest danger, in the midst of the enchantment.

> "For by this means
> He knew the foul inchanter, though disguis'd,
> Enter'd the very lime-twigs of his spells,
> And yet came off." COMUS, v. 644.

The controversy as to the miscellaneous papers, it was said, had been on both sides overlaid. Whether Shakspeare, when in love and seventeen, had knotted his own hair and written soft nonsense to his intended bride — whether he wrote connundrums for Maister Cowley, and scrawled his own

arms without knowing the *dexter* side of the shield; whether FOR, the preposition, was ever spelt FORRE, or the conjunction, AND, had ever been written with a final E, were points on which people might differ long, and contract animosities as violent, as trifles of a different kind, but not greater importance, have inspired, since men began to love themselves. But the whole concern was now to be submitted to another kind of test — the sovereign genius of our dramatic lord was about to display itself on a public stage, in an historical drama never seen before, and his countrymen were to ask their heads and their hearts the obvious questions — "Are these "the sentiments, is this the language, of Shak-"speare?"

Ireland's fancy or his fears had converted that mild gentleman, Mr. Malone, into a furious Saracen, fighting with poisoned weapons against Vortigern; and he accordingly issued a hand-bill on the night of performance, bespeaking the candour of the audience. This his son could not procure, when writing on the subject; but it lies before me, and shall be preserved as the last instance of his *paternal* care of Vortigern.

"VORTIGERN.

"A malevolent and impotent attack on the "Shakspeare MSS. having appeared on the eve of "representation of the play of VORTIGERN, evi-"dently intended to injure the interest of the pro-

" prietor of the MSS., Mr. Ireland feels it impossi-
" ble, within the short space of time that intervenes
" between the publishing and the representation,
" to produce an answer to the most illiberal and
" unfounded assertions in Mr. Malone's Inquiry.
" He is therefore induced to request that the play
" of Vortigern may be heard with that candour,
" that has ever distinguished a British audience."

On the 2d of April the play was acted. In order to be quite right, the number of lines in it had been regulated by one of Shakspeare's acknowledged dramas; and there were some other points of imitation, which a fair critic will also offer to the reader's attention. The *Seven Ages*, from As You Like It, produced a division into *lustres*, not the most luminous; but the laughter was too excessive to allow the close of this brief history of man. The rash hand of our youth could not abstain from plundering the sublime *eulogy* on our composition in the play of Hamlet. It is astonishing that even young Ireland did not see, or that his friend Talbot did not admonish him, that a GREAT GENIUS does not repeat HIMSELF in this way. With the representative truth of nature, he shares in her abundance, and is known by his endless diversity. To resemble the mighty father of our drama, therefore, the forger must not think of the same things, but feel in the same manner.

If this be just as to mere descriptive or moral

beauties, it applies with even greater force to the treatment of any PASSION. Let us consider, for a moment, that of *jealousy*, as it exhibits itself from the mind of Shakspeare. See how it is diversified by the *natures* on which it operates; view it in all its varieties of temperament, in Leontes and Ford, in Posthumus and Othello. But neither these nor any considerations of prudence or criticism seem to have crossed our forger in his progress; confident that the world would be deceived, he appears, at times, to have *revelled* in the grossness of his impositions.

The principal members of the cast were, Mr. BENSLEY (shortly to close his theatric life) in the character of *Constantius;* Mr. C. Kemble *Pascentius;* Mr. KEMBLE himself *Vortigern.* Mrs. Siddons (prescient of some storm) had begged to be excused, and Edmunda was sustained by Mrs. POWELL; Mrs. JORDAN (I used to think a true *believer!*) Flavia; and Rowena, the beautiful Miss Miller. The eternal attendant, Tidswell, with two *aides-de-camp*, Misses Leake and Heard, were in waiting on Edmunda.

Great importance was naturally attached to the mode in which this sublime work of the author of King Lear should be ushered to the public audience. The laureate was flattered with this complimentary task. That true scholar and upright man, Mr. Pye, in the company of one of our most accomplished antiquaries, visited the mass of papers

in Norfolk Street. For a short period, I remember, he believed, and resisted the positive judgment of his friend. But let it in candour or courtesy be remembered, that Mr. Pye's studies had lain chiefly among the Greek and Roman writers, and their earliest imitators, the Italians. Of our ancient language he had made no particular study. But when he came to look at the consequences of a positive *affirmation* by himself of the TRUTH of at all events a doubtful matter, he drew himself back with the aid of Touchstone, and placed his prologue under the convenient panoply of the *virtuous* conjunction.

> " IF in our scenes your eyes delighted find
> Marks that denote the mighty master's mind;—
> IF, at his words the tears of pity flow,
> Your breasts with horror thrill, with rapture glow;—
> Demand no other proof:
> But IF these proofs should fail;—IF in the strain
> Ye seek the Drama's awful sire in vain,
> Should critics, heralds, antiquaries join
> To give their FIAT to each *doubtful* line,
> Believe them *not*."

It may readily be imagined, that this cautious introduction, however approved by the manager, would seem frigid to the *flaming faith* of old Ireland; but he softened his rejection of it to the decent remark, " that it did not strongly *enough* " assert the authenticity of the play."

Another poet presented himself, who had not been alarmed into equal discretion, or whose usual

critical judgment had been "blasted with extasy," and Sir James Bland Burges assured the audience, in his prologue, with undoubting confidence, that

"Before the court immortal SHAKSPEARE stands."

That court was thronged to suffocation; but the row in the front boxes, which I had secured, gave me the complete view of the box inhabited by the "great possessors" of the treasures; and no earthly sum could compensate the agonies, which I saw them endure that evening. INTEGRITY, TALENT, PROFIT were all in jeopardy —

"The storm was up and all things on the hazard."

The fatal mischief was the want of interest in the play — it was a dull chronicle put in action, enlivened occasionally by the lubberly aukwardness of Dignum and Phillimore; and now and then pressed into a laborious comparison with some REAL flight of the poet, too accurately remembered by the author. Mr. Kemble himself had one of these fine things in his custody, which he gave with remarkable energy to the house.

Vortigern.

"Full fifty breathless bodies struck my sight;
And some with gaping mouths did seem to mock me;
Whilst others, smiling in cold death itself,
Scoffingly bade me look on that, which soon
Would wrench from off my brow this sacred crown,
And make me too a subject like themselves.

Subject! — to whom? — to thee, O sovereign Death!
Who hast for thy domain this world immense.
Church-yards and charnel-houses are thy haunts,
And hospitals thy sumptuous palaces.
And when thou wouldst be merry, thou dost choose
The gaudy chamber of a dying king.
O, then thou dost ope wide thy hideous jaws,
And with rude laughter and fantastic tricks
Thou clapp'st thy rattling fingers to thy sides.
And when the solemn mockery is o'er,
With icy hand thou *tak'st him by the feet,*
And *upward so,* till thou dost reach the heart,
And wrap him in the cloak of lasting night."

This passage is a good deal in the taste of Dr. Blair's poem of the *Grave*, with some palpable struggles after the frantic imagery of King John and the melancholy of Richard II. The reference to Falstaff's death and the *handy* action of poor Mrs. Quickly convulsed the audience with merriment. The *solemn mockery* was indeed over, and a lasting night threatened to enfold the genius of the Pseudo-Shakspeare.

An Epilogue, written by Merry, and still keeping up the positive ascription of the play to Shakspeare, was spoken, with much effort, by Mrs. Jordan; and on the following morning the Treasury accounted with the elder Ireland, for the receipt of the night, 206*l.*; charges being first deducted. The son got 60*l.*, he tells us, out of the 300*l.* paid down; and 30*l.* more out of the 103*l.*; the half of the ONLY receipt out of the promised SIXTY.

Such was the close of this unadvised and unprincipled attempt upon the prejudices and the purses of the public. It was a defeat from which there was no rallying — exposure brought on confession — sincerity, if it really spoke at last, spoke without belief; the father refused to credit the talent that was in his son: — alienation, resentment, shame, and unceasing perplexity, have followed from the opening this modern CHEST of Pandora, out of which even *Hope* itself had now flown.

But let me find, in this record of ruin, a few lines to regret, that a really poetical mind should have been sacrificed to this tempting imposition. By whomsoever written, the following lines in the play of Henry the Second, came from the same source; and that source if a man is to be believed upon his oath, was the fancy of a youth, not eighteen years of age: —

> " *Henry.* That I could mellow now this iron tongue,
> And fashion it to music of soft love!
> But so it is that, from my childhood upwards,
> I have been bred in hoarse and jarring war.
> My spring of youth within a camp was spent:
> There have I sat upon a soldier's knee;
> Whilst *round my neck* was twin'd a GIANT ARM
> So *toughly set*, that one might say indeed
> The *sinews that did work it were of* BRASS."

Surely the young nurseling of a camp never sat for his portrait to an abler painter.

That Mr. Kemble was very deeply concerned at this failure, I do not affect to say. The proprie-

tors of the theatre had thought proper to enter into competition with Mr. Harris for this play of Vortigern. But it was written, with the exception of Mrs. Powell, for the people who acted it; and as an affair of business, perhaps the speculation was worth the trial. But the 300*l.* down was an extraordinary oversight; because the whole of that sum was lost, and all that had been laid out in scenery and decorations. The play, bad as it was, turned out the only source of profit to the Irelands. The BOOK was detected before it could be subscribed off or sold; and many reams of most magnificent paper hung as a heavy debt over the head of the editor. I incline to think that, had the illegible MSS. been kept, at all events, *longer* from the press, and been rendered the mere heralds of the plays, suspicion, it is true, could not have been banished; but discovery would have been averted or delayed. The plays, under the notion of curtailment (always necessary to Shakspeare it seems), might have been purified sufficiently for success; our enthusiasm would soon have heightened to the *wonderful* any tolerable passages they might contain; and, at the PRESENT HOUR, some people might have thought it possible for Shakspeare to have written Vortigern! In the mean time, money, for either benefit nights or copyright, would have poured in upon the projectors of the scheme: but, when once the book exhibited the *autographs* to the world in general, the whole business was demonstrated to be a

forgery. The MUSEUM had shown, that Lord Southampton, the patron of the poet, if he wrote at all to Shakspeare, communicated not only in legible, but elegant, penmanship. The signature of that nobleman never varied; and the handwriting is in every turn confirmed by the copy of Sidney's Arcadia, in my library (the folio, 1593); on the title page of which he has inscribed his name. IRELAND, not being able to tell how his Lordship signed himself, took his own left hand into use for the occasion, and made him scrawl his benevolence to the poet in characters that disgraced it. I shall leave this short chapter of IMPOSITION "unmixed with baser matter," for a reason that seldom occurs; namely, that, at least in literary subjects, none baser will easily be found.

"Such then, said Una, as she seemeth here,
Such is the face of Falshood; such the sight
Of fowle Duessa, when her borrowed light
Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.

Thus when they had the witch disrobed quight,
And all her filthy feature open showne,
They let her goe at will, and wander waies unknowne."

Faerie Queene, b. 1. c. viii. s. 49.

CHAP. X.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURE TO MR. KEMBLE. — MISS LEE'S ALMEYDA. — MAHMOUD. — KIRK'S CRUELTIES. — MR. BENSLEY RETIRES FROM THE STAGE. —MRS. KEMBLE ALSO. — COLMAN'S. —ELLISTON, — ACTS OCTAVIAN. — PREPARATORY TO SIR EDWARD MORTIMER. — PREFACE TO THE IRON CHEST. — DEATH OF DODD. —NO TRUE SUCCESSOR TO HIM. — LAMASH. — DIFFICULTIES IN DRURY. — MR. KEMBLE THROWS UP THE MANAGEMENT.— MR. PITT, A GLANCE AT HIM. — ELLISTON AT COVENT GARDEN. — MADEMOISELLE PARISSOT. — DOWTON. — THOMSON'S EDWARD AND ELEONORA. — ALCESTIS. — FORTUNE'S FOOL. — JEPHSON. — HOLMAN. — HOLCROFT. — FORCE OF RIDICULE.— MISS FARREN. — ARNOLD. — CURE FOR THE HEART ACHE. — MRS. POPE'S DEATH. — GARRICK AND THAT ACTRESS. — MISS FARREN'S MARRIAGE. — REYNOLDS GOES TO DRURY LANE. —GARRICK'S MONUMENT.

SHAKSPEARE being now left to his legitimate honours; and the indifference or bad taste of the proprietors of Drury Lane having received not only a check, but an exposure, a good deal of irritation remained, and the ratification of Mr. Kemble's sentence by the public, however agreeable to himself, could not be expected to be palatable to those who had infringed upon his province

to the detriment of their property. The elder Ireland, too, kept up a constant battery against Kemble, as having by his conduct injured his employers equally with the author of the play, by which one convenient moral principle is established; THAT a stage manager owes nothing to the public, to Shakspeare, to truth, to honour: he is a man bound to fetter his understanding; to lend a lie the confidence of truth, and swallow his own disgrace; although he have been as confident all along of the imposition, as he was of his own remonstrance. It was unfortunate, too, that the management was not prepared with any tragedy, that promised very brilliant success: the spurious was bad, and the genuine not good. Miss Lee, a lady of considerable talent, turned perhaps rather to romance than tragedy, had long been known to Mrs. Siddons, who accepted the character of Almeyda, in her tragedy so called. The principal male character, Alonzo, was acted by Mr. Kemble. This was a poetical and busy play, but it lived only four nights, and it is therefore useless to go into its fable.

The opera of Mahmoud, by Prince Hoare, had been the last work of magnitude undertaken by Stephen Storace; and, as the piece had been powerfully written, Mr. Kemble acted the hero in his happiest style; and the opera succeeded to the full wishes of its modest author, who presented his profits to the widow of his friend, the composer.

The elder son of the sultan being supported by our great tragedian, the younger was sustained by Mr. Braham, who thus commenced his exertions upon the stage of a theatre royal, to which he was destined to impart a perfection of musical science and execution hitherto unconnected with our opera, and to which eight-and-twenty years have never offered the shadow of a rival.

Mr. Hoare was now so popular, that a tragedy formerly composed by him upon the subject of Kirk's cruelties, and called *Such Things were*, was acted on the stage of Drury Lane for Mrs. Siddons's benefit, on the 2d of May, two days after the appearance of his opera. As to his farces, they were constantly before the public.

The 6th of May, 1796, witnessed the last performance of Mr. Bensley on the English stage. He acted Evander in the Grecian Daughter, and embraced an Euphrasia worthy of him in the person of Mrs. Siddons. I have not, I hope, slighted the peculiar talents of this very accomplished gentleman, whose retirement added no few parts to the range of Mr. Kemble's performances: he could now, if he chose, relinquish Jaffier for Pierre, and Othello occasionally for Iago; but where, then, could be found an equal substitute for the conspirator and the moor? Wroughton did not quite rise to heroic tragedy; and Palmer, except in a few tragedies, hardly seemed to be in earnest. Barrymore was not above second rate; and Charles Kemble yet *young*

and almost untried. Bensley was therefore a *serious* loss in the current business; besides the respectability that his name, his literature, and his connexions conferred upon any theatrical community. A retirement of an honourable kind was provided for him, the appointment of Barrack-master at Knightsbridge; Mr. Bensley having originally served in the army.

There was yet another retirement this season from the same theatre. Mrs. Kemble had sustained a line of business on the stage, of a very interesting though not a striking kind. The reader will understand the cast by one instance, *Maria* in the School for Scandal. Her comedy, though sprightly and sensible, had never any great force; and she had not increased her voice with the dimensions of the theatre. Mr. Kemble now determined that she should quit the profession; and on the 23d of May, she attempted to take her leave. The task of talking forty verses *to* an audience would perhaps have been painful to her at any time; but connected with her present feelings, she could hardly articulate what her friend Greatheed had written for the occasion. Mr. Kemble came forward to receive her; and taking her hand, expressed, in his most graceful manner, his own sensibility for that constant kindness of the audience, which had attended her on that *spot*, at all events, from her infancy.

The little theatre this summer was considerably

strengthened; both the Palmers were engaged; and Elliston, from the Bath Theatre, made his first appearance in Octavian on the 25th of June. It was, in substance, the Octavian of Kemble, some of the subtler spirit flown off; and the partial loss of what was poetical and picturesque compensated, as far as such wants admit of compensation, by the ardour of youth and a voice of very unusual power; manly beyond the age and figure of the actor. No young man in my experience ever exhibited higher promise: but Elliston at the very first was as high in the art as he could reach. I remember that Mr. Kemble expressed himself pleased at the performance, while at the same time he pointed out some passages, where the young artist was, what he used to call, "*abroad*": but the audience were enthusiastic in their reception of Mr. Elliston; and it is yet a subject of astonishment, how he could allow *tragedy* to slip away from him. In the farce of My Grandmother, he acted *Vapour* on the night of his Octavian: such very opposite pretensions rarely preserve any balance. Garrick, Henderson, alone in our times, left it doubtful to which muse they most inclined.

It has been unfortunately my province to notice of late too many failures of established authors. The Alfred, or, as according better with the author, the *magic banner* of O'Keefe, was no more endurable than the other attempts to exhibit the great King upon the stage — and the Don Pedro, or

Diabolo of Cumberland, merely afforded a noisy blusterer to John Palmer, of little benefit to the theatre. In short, the manager's season was, as usual, to depend upon himself, and on the 29th of August, the great attempt was made to render the Iron Chest popular, and, what followed of course, profitable to the author. Elliston was destined to Sir Edward Mortimer, and the piece, except as to curtailment, was unaltered. I have, upon the original production of the play, sufficiently spoken my *own* sentiments: and shall here therefore record the opinions of some attentive observers, who, glad that the experiment succeeded at the Haymarket, saw grounds enough why equal favour might be missed at another theatre. It first then struck them, that no paring down could render the play otherwise than *heavy*, nor its interest of a kind calculated to give the *proper* enjoyment of tragedy; that the composition was more than bearably turgid, particularly in the ravings of Sir Edward. By the just influence of a manager over his company, and timing the scenes with proper attention at the rehearsals, he had excited less languor, and NO disgust in his audience; but it was applauded only where the actor *laboured* for applause; and two or three violent explosions of Elliston were alone commended or remembered. It was, in fact, still a failure; from the unfortunate choice of a subject, the offspring of POLITICAL SPLEEN, and exhibiting a character that, in either manly or gentle-

manly nature, never did exist, to disgrace our species. They said of his singular *preface*, that, if it added to his reputation as a writer, it took away much from his usual distinctions of *candour* and *temper*. They reminded him, that disapprobation had been expressed at Drury Lane *before* the entrance of Mr. Kemble; and that he had himself admitted the want of curtailment; and left it only as a duty of implication upon those, who conceived they should insult a man of genius, by pretending thus to condemn what had been written with full knowledge and long experience of the stage.

On the 12th of September, Mr. Harris opened his theatre for the winter season. The reader has been, no doubt, astonished, with the writer, at the hurry and ignorance, and confidence of architects; the new editions of their works, with corrections and additions, which came out every season. There is a literature of the day, and an architecture:—

> "You laid out twenty thousand pounds before;
> Well, do you feel it? Why then lay out MORE."

The entrances of the house were now altered. Its grand saloon, "a name without a thing," among ourselves, was converted into a coffee-room: what once held the celebrated Beef-steak Club was to produce comfort of a thinner kind, and afford space to the loungers in the lobbies:—

> "Of the camelion's dish I eat,—the AIR."

Seven rows of seats were added to eleven of the centre boxes of the second and third tiers, which would merely admit 144 persons more than usual, and the produce of this accommodation nightly could be only 43*l.* 4*s.* to the manager, and not 140*l.*, as had been asserted *falsely;* I think, libellously. To be serious, if possible, the manager always expected the *miraculous draught*, provided his nets could but be made large enough to contain the fish.

I am almost to exemplify the truism in the Night Thoughts —

"We take no note of time, but from *some* loss."

On the 17th of September, 1796, the constant associate of Parsons in Comedy, and like himself unrivalled,—the genteel, the airy coxcomb of another age, William Dodd, *tottered* into the grave. I reprove myself for a ludicrous expression, caught from the recollection of his manner; and besides, the death of such a comedian is indeed a *serious* thing: —serious, because much of the comedy of the last age has since absolutely wanted an interpreter. After the usual and indispensable noviciate in country theatres, during which Dodd had acted tragedy as well as comedy, he yielded to an invitation from Garrick in the year 1765, and on the 3d of October made his first bow in the character of Faddle, in the Foundling, a comedy by Edward Moore. From that time, under Mr. Gar-

rick and his successors, he continued at the theatre royal, Drury Lane, where he had learned and practised his art for a period of more than THIRTY YEARS. How it happened I do not know, but no actor seems ever to have made Dodd his model; and, in consequence, all have been as unlike the accomplished beau of Cibber, as they were to his representative at Drury Lane. The tasselled cane, the china snuff-box, have lost their honours, and with the management of these weapons is fled the unembarrassed display of the person, and the mode of speaking pointed language. Here even Mr. Kemble's knowledge was unavailing. Bannister used to call him an excellent *judge* of comic acting, and so in truth he was; but not HIMSELF professing that part of the art devoted to the exhibition of life where the *foibles* of man compose his *character*, he could not teach the way to excellence like Dodd's. Lamash had great advantages; but though, perhaps, he might have been said to *promise* one day to become a coxcomb, yet as he never kept a promise of *any* kind, THAT, among the rest, was passed over. In one part only did he reach excellence and hold it,—the character of *Idle*.

The reader has probably borne rather steadily in mind the two singular addresses to the public on the subject of the stage-management of Drury Lane Theatre. One from King, who had run away violently from responsibility without an atom of power; the other from Mr. Kemble, who seemed

fully satisfied with the terms of his trust, who anticipated no difficulties that he could not surmount, and found himself in the condition of Pyrrha's admirer in Horace.

> " Qui semper vacuam, semper amabilem
> Sperat, nescius auræ
> Fallacis! Miseri, quibus
> Intentata nites."

But I have already given some strong indications, that whatever opinion had been formed of Mr. Kemble, it was impossible even for HIM to be left to the direction of his own judgment. Influence, in a variety of ways, thwarted him; absurd schemes annoyed him; and, above all, difficulties arising from old debts and the building of a new theatre, really took him more time to remove, though only for the passing day, than all the proper business of his station, twice told. A variety of pleasant billets announced to the treasurer, that " a leading actor " or actress would not *go on*, without the arrears of " salary were paid up." One of the stage furnishers " would not supply an article essential to a coming " novelty, on all the pledges of the proprietors, " unless Mr. Kemble would pass his word for the " payment." His goodnature often led him into such engagements; and, usually, money was found to keep him harmless. At length, I well remember, my friend had the mortification to be arrested on one of these engagements, and his indignation was extreme to be so wickedly disgraced. When the duty he had to discharge was considered, per-

haps a *seat* should have been provided in a certain assembly, to secure the public appearance of the manager upon all occasions, by the inviolability of his person.* If ever there was one individual more particularly than another scrupulous as to fair dealing in the world, that one was Mr. Kemble; but his ways and means were all simple and direct. He was, through life, a child even in the forms of business; but, in the literal sense of the terms, a punctual paymaster and strictly honest man. On this occasion the person got his money; and Mr. Kemble relinquished the management. Mr. Wroughton, it was announced, succeeded him; and the theatre opened on the 20th of September, after the plan of the minor house, with *three farces*. The distracted state of the concern was obvious in the very play-bills; and Wroughton was, perhaps, as little the object of envy, as any manager ever was: the house overwhelmed with debt; the salaries often unpaid; and succeeding also such a man as Mr. Kemble. There is one comfort that waits upon real greatness; a man loses no respect, by ceasing to command. The mimic world resembles the real. When Mr. Pitt, Heaven knows why! was succeeded by Mr. Addington, it was the most amusing thing in this town, to see him walking

* There is another and a more honourable reason, which was assigned in the case of Roscius, and applies equally to Mr. Kemble. "Whom the people of Rome know to be a better man, than he is an actor; and while he makes the first figure on the stage for his art, is worthy of the senate for his virtue."

along the Strand leisurely and alone, and enjoying idleness like a sinecure. Kemble now was at leisure for book sales, and even shop windows; and gave himself up to such amusements as were suitable to his taste.

Elliston had done so much at the Haymarket, that he was tempted to the greater scene of Covent Garden, and acted Cumberland's Jew there on the 21st of September. Murray followed him on the 30th in the Jew of Shakspeare, and the farcical character of Bagatelle. This gentleman was a permanent acquisition to the company, an actor of great feeling and propriety.

D'Egville, whom Mr. Kemble had placed at the head of the ballet department, had composed a very pleasing dance, called the *Triumph of Love*, for the purpose of introducing a novelty in the art in the person of Mademoiselle Parissot. She became very fortunately a perfect rage. As a dancer she was nothing; but her attitudes had a power of fascination, to which all ages among us rendered homage. Yet her look guarded her whole person from any *risque* in its display — it was a species of *floating grace*, that has peopled the air often in the angelic forms of the Italian painters; but never seemed to have pressed upon earth before. There was something also interesting in her story. She was a person of distinction; one of the victims of the revolution, who had turned her accomplishment into a *profession;* and, by immense application, at last needed only an occasional resort

to mere attitude. Still, however, posture was her perfection.

I have already mentioned Cumberland's admiration of Dowton; it procured him an engagement at Drury Lane, and on the 11th of October he acted that author's Jew. In Dowton's serious speaking there is a slight tremor allied something to the enthusiastic, which excites on the stage in degree, what it produces more abundantly elsewhere, deep interest. His humour seems to the present day peculiar: it reminds me only of Yates; who probably reminded some very old stagers of Doggett. And this merits observation. Notwithstanding the endless diversity among individuals, partial affinity and the demands of *language*, produce a classification both of mankind and their representatives. In stage history, therefore, the succession of actors to each other's business is regulated by that parallel talent, which though never quite touching, (that is, becoming *identical*) is sufficiently near, because it takes the same course; and, a little over or a little under its predecessor, arrives at the same end.

At whose recommendation, I know not, probably Mr. Kemble's, who had been, as we have seen, looking to Thomson for additions to Coriolanus, that author's Edward and Eleonora was on the 22d of October revived for himself and his sister. But the heroic devotion of the Princess is better to hear of than see; and accordingly is detailed by Daraxa to the audience in the third act. Now this scene

fades to nothing before its original, the Alcestis of Euripides. The student of poetry will be improved as well as gratified by comparing the descriptions of the two attendants with each other. He will find in the English poet no one additional circumstance of either grace or pathos, and the exquisite simplicity of Milton's Greek favourite muddled away into common cant and philosophical abstraction — "spotless white" — "the altar" — "the eternal mind," and so on, instead of nature's own actions detailed in the obvious descriptive terms, and genuine emotion bursting into its only language. Alcestis, when the day of her generous self-devotion arrives, laves her pure limbs in not purer water from the fountain: and then, *woman* as well as pagan, turns over her wardrobe, and selects from her apparel a splendid robe; and thus gorgeously arrayed for this great sacrifice of the heart, implores of the goddess, Vesta, unions less disastrous for her children. She then punctiliously visits *every* altar in the palace; there repeats her vows, and decorates them with flowers. — "She heaves no sigh, she sheds no tear," and preserves the "natural ruby on her cheek" until she enters her chamber, and presses the nuptial couch: then first she softens into grief, and apostrophises the scene of her chaste endearments. She kisses the unconscious bed, breaks from it, and returns as often bathing it with her tears. Then, as her children hang upon her robe, she raises them in

succession, and folds them to her breast. Among the weeping servants she next administers consolation; speaks to each of them as she tenders her *right* hand, and permits the meanest to speak to her in return.—But I must here break off, however reluctantly, to relate that Edward and Eleonora was a flat and creeping business, and never called for by a second audience. Very conveniently for the author's reputation, after it had been cast and rehearsed in the year 1739, at Covent Garden, the Lord Chamberlain interposed his, that is, the ROYAL veto, against the performance of the Leicester House Tragedy. To a reader of our own times it has nothing very formidable. There might originally have been something more. Party, too, is very dexterous as to applications, which perish with the times.

My friend Reynolds, on the 29th of October, presented to the town one of his annual pleasantries called *Fortune's Fool*, made up from the results of a Trip to Gretna, and the trickery of a match-making woman. The reader is by this time aware of the grand secret, and therefore ready to burst in upon me with, "Well, but tell me what was Lewis in the piece?" and, "Spare your arithmetic; never count the turns, once, and a million." Mr. Lewis, Sir, I answer, since you will not allow me to tell Reynolds's story (indeed I never knew a man who could tell *one* of his stories after HIMSELF;) Mr. Lewis was a Welch gentleman of great sprightliness named Haphazard;—Mr. Quick cultivated

the black-letter; Mr. Fawcett, — but enough, I see you understand much of his design, and can guess at its execution.

I have had great pleasure in commemorating the esteem of Mr. Kemble for Captain Jephson. That author had written a tragedy upon the subject of the *Clemenza di Tito*, called The Conspiracy. But the "Roman portraits" of this author were denied the popularity of his other writings. A scanty dramatis personæ on such a subject is not to the taste of an English audience; and the crowded business, with which Shakspeare fills his Roman stage, is absolutely essential, unless, with the unsullied splendor of Addison, you have such a personage to present as CATO himself. Mr. Kemble was the Sextus of the conspiracy; Mrs. Siddons, Vitellia; Palmer, Titus.

At the other theatre Holman followed his friend Reynolds with an opera, called *Abroad and at Home*, of which the success was considerable. It was at times difficult to ascertain the parts in a composition proceeding from the little knot of intimates, Andrews, Reynolds, Morton, and Holman: but it is quite apparent that much of Abroad and at Home must have come from the pen of Holman. It was prose more pointed and of a better tune, such as an actor will, if he writes, always endeavour at, as easier to deliver. Cibber is a master in this well-balanced dialogue — see *passim*, the Careless Husband.

On the 6th of December, Holcroft again occupied the stage of Drury Lane, with a comedy called the *Force of Ridicule*. It was perdurably damned. The play had been put up for Tuesday the 29th of November; but Miss Farren did not come to the theatre to dress, and at seven o'clock Palmer had to announce that she was too ill to leave her room. But she had a large arrear of salary due to her, and took the occasion, that a new play afforded, of insisting upon her money: as that did not arrive in Green Street, the lovely actress did not arrive at the theatre. At another season, I will insert some of Mr. Kemble's own supplications to Peake, the treasurer, very characteristic of a theatre under Mr. Sheridan.

On the 10th of December, young Arnold succeeded in a musical afterpiece, called the *Shipwreck:* his father, the doctor, composed for him; and he began, as an author, to rise from under the sarcasm of Colman; who, when dunned to accept his pieces, and pay a debt to the father, said "the two demands involved a contradiction — it was impossible to do BOTH."

Morton had written very carefully a comedy, which, like those of Reynolds, depended principally upon Lewis, and, on the 10th of January 1797, it appeared under the title of *A Cure for the Heart Ache*. The Rapids and the Vortexes were among the most amusing characters of the modern stage. At the age of 52, Mrs. Pope was selected by the

judgment of Morton to perform one of his youthful heroines; but she was taken ill during the run of the comedy, and, after a struggle of some weeks, expired on the 15th of March, 1797.

The loss of such an actress as Mrs. Pope, really indisposes the mind to remember either the *Friend in Need* of Hoare, or the *Raymond and Agnes* of Farley; yet they were both highly serviceable to the theatre. I have alluded, in my own sketch of her as an actress, to the eulogium pronounced upon her by Mr. Harris. I am of opinion, that a fitter occasion will not offer, to combine her with another manager, Mr. Garrick himself. The last time he acted the crown of all his achievements, King Lear, Miss Younge was his Cordelia; and her hand, as it is usual, was fast locked in his at the dropping of the curtain. He led her thus into the Green Room; and, remembering with a sigh, that one more night would terminate his dramatic existence, he exclaimed to her, "Ah, Bess! this is the last time of "MY being your father! You must now look out, "therefore, to be adopted by some one else." "Why "then, Sir," said Miss Younge, "give me a father's "*blessing*:" and she threw herself gracefully upon her knees before him. Garrick kindled with the enthusiasm of his favourite, and replied with great energy, "God bless you!" Then, raising his eyes to the rest of the performers, he solemnly added, "And may God bless you all!" His emotion was

too high to trust longer to language, for he instantly retired.

Mrs. Pope lies in the west cloister of the abbey, between the graves of two celebrated men, Dr. Dupuis, a great harmonist, and Sir Richard Jebb, a celebrated physician.

But the stage suffers sometimes from other tyranny than that of death, and we were shortly to sustain certainly an equal loss at the demand of RANK. Elizabeth, Countess of Derby, daughter of James, Duke of Hamilton, dying on the 14th of March 1797, the Earl of Derby announced his intention to Miss Farren of elevating her speedily to a coronet; and on the 8th of April, she appeared for the last time on the stage in the character of Lady Teazle. She declined addressing the audience herself on this occasion, and stood at a slight distance, supported on the arms of Mr. King and Miss Miller, while Wroughton announced her departure, and apologized for the *silence* which it had been arranged was to be preserved by the Countess elect. The ten lines spoken by Wroughton had the character of Lord Derby's muse, who now verified his old prediction —

"Perhaps a FARREN may *return no more.*"

She, however, advanced after the verses had been spoken, and made the three established curtsies, to the right and left sides of the house first, and then,

in the front of the stage, to the general mass of the people. The house on this night was remarkably brilliant. There was a strong curiosity among the ladies, to see how she would *look* upon this occasion. But it was not a head that *could* suffer. Her dwelling-house had been long graced by the portraits of the Derby family; and the union was not less *desired*, than expected, by the children of the first marriage. On the 1st of May the nuptial ceremony was performed at the Earl's house, in Grosvenor Square, and the *parties* left town immediately for the Oaks.

The intimacy between Mr. Wroughton and Reynolds, and the complete possession of the comic stage now secured to Mrs. Jordan, led the dramatist to offer his comedy of *The Will* to Drury Lane Theatre, and it was accepted. To be sure there was some good-humoured astonishment expressed at the boldness of a Covent Garden author thus invading the domain of genuine comedy; and the almost miracle of getting their salaries, from the success of this very play, hardly removed the film from the eyes of the company. Mrs. Jordan's Albina, in a *naval* uniform, was a point of peculiar interest. It has more bustle, I think, than any of his comedies. Andrews and Rogers together, contrived a remarkably pleasant parody on the Seven Ages of Shakspeare, as an epilogue to this play; the best point is the school-girl — but the wife in the *patent coffin* was in course the favourite.

Covent Garden, as a sort of balance, gave on the 25th of April, a comic opera called the Italian Villagers, written by Prince Hoare, rather in Shakspearian language; and this, again, was followed by a frequently pillaged play of Dr. Hoadley's, called The Tatlers. Mrs. Siddons took her benefit on the 1st of May, this season, and Kemble and she acted the Wilmots in Lillo's Fatal Curiosity. At the conclusion of the evening's entertainments, forth came the Queen of Tears, to weep over the loss of *comedy*, and wish every happiness to her *wedding-day*—even *Fatal Curiosity* was pressed into the service, and the *Deuce was in 'em*, if with such honours and talents, the noble pair were not completely happy! This sad trash was gently insinuated to come from Mrs. Piozzi. I should incline to think, it must have taken more cups of tea than ever she poured out in ten hours for Dr. Johnson, to lower her really brilliant *spirit* to such a composition.

On Sunday the 11th of June, the mural monument, put up in Westminster Abbey to the memory of Garrick, was opened to the public. It is Sir Joshua's *thought*, of Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy, utterly spoiled by a Mr. Webber; and Mr. Pratt has inscribed upon the marble twelve lines of the most wretched plagiarism that ever rhymed together. When, some years afterwards, I saw the venerable and tasteful Dr. Vincent turn his back upon them, to pronounce his affecting tribute

over the grave of Cumberland, I could not but wish that, as dean, he had been curator also of monuments, and ensured that all inscriptions, in the abbey of Westminster, should be in classical Latin, or, at least, unvulgar English.

It should be recorded, although I think the mode of the relief improper, that on the 14th of June, a benefit was given to the widows and orphans of those brave men who fell in the glorious action of the 14th of February 1797, under Lord St. Vincent. On this occasion, every description of force was brought into the field. The entertainments selected were, the Country Girl, Peggy's Love, No Song No Supper, and the grand ballet of Cupid and Psyche: and the Covent Garden company were strengthened by Mrs. Abington, Mrs. Jordan, Sig. Storace, and the whole *corps de ballet* from the Opera. The receipt was immense. It may hardly be necessary to explain myself further in the objection hinted at above; but I am decidedly of opinion, that the state is the only medium through which public services should be rewarded. The people constitutionally act through their representatives. I dislike any of these *amusing* supplements to the solemn propriety of a grant from Parliament.

CHAP. XI.

LOSSES OF THE STAGE. — OLD MACKLIN DIES. — HEIR AT LAW. — CHARACTER OF FAWCETT. — MR. BOADEN'S ITALIAN MONK. — PALMER PERFECT. — MISS DECAMP IN ROSALBA. — MRS. LITCHFIELD. — MRS. ABINGTON. — HAPPY PROLOGUE FOR HER BY COLMAN. — MISS FARREN, HOW SUCCEEDED. — CHEAP LIVING. — MRS. CRAWFORD. — MONK LEWIS. — CASTLE SPECTRE. — MR. KEMBLE IN THAT PLAY. — MORTON'S SECRETS WORTH KNOWING. — COLMAN'S BLUE-BEARD. — THE STRANGER. — MR. KEMBLE. — MRS. HALLER. — CHARACTER DISSECTED. — PERFECTION OF KEMBLE IN THE STRANGER. — NOVELTIES. — BLUE DEVILS. — FRENCH FABLE. — LE TEXIER. — CAMBRO BRITONS. — PALMER'S FAREWELL TO THE AUTHOR. — HIS DEATH. — BENEFITS FOR HIS CHILDREN.

We have recently seen too many of the sons and daughters of the stage taken from it; and on the 11th of July 1797, the father of the stage, old Macklin himself, expired. He appears to have been born on the 1st of May 1690, and consequently to have attained the extraordinary age of 107 years 2 months and 10 days. That so little should be known of his life, is one of the remarkable parts of his character. He had most probably omitted to put down the transactions of his youth, and in his

decline a few floating, nearly vague recollections, about the middle of his existence, were all that he could attempt to detail. I have already laid before the reader my opinion of him as an actor, and shown something of the critical force of his mind. What remains is to notice the place of his interment, which was a new vault under the chancel of St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

The character of the stage history is best described by the great master of the stage itself — it is compounded of extremes, and passes from melancholy to mirth with the swift transition of a scene.

> "With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,"

is not more characteristic of the majesty of Denmark, than it is of the few adjacent pages. The reader will be entirely of this opinion, when he shall find the *Heir at Law* the next feature to the decease of Macklin. That most delightful comedy was acted the first time on the 15th of July, the evening of the day on which the veteran was buried, and Munden, after attending the funeral, had to perform a new character in the play.

Whatever doubt might exist as to the Iron Chest, not the slightest was ever heard about the *Heir at Law*. It was one of the lightest and gayest among a better description of modern comedies: not absolutely original, for vulgarity has often been driven from usurped and ill-suited honours; but still so

rich in manners, so whimsical in situation, so broad in humour, so happy in combination, that it was received as a *chef d'œuvre* by every order of critic. But Fawcett must share with Colman the honours of Pangloss. He here at once attained the perfection of the art as a comedian, — distinct impersonation. He was enough of the *scholar*, to understand, to enjoy, and to display either the vanity, the pedantry, or the servility of the *tutor*. His untiring ardour, his rapidity, and his happy blunt interjectional point of— *hem!* placed him out of the reach of rivalry in the part. Let me seize the opportunity, afforded by his merit as an actor, to say something of Fawcett as a man. In every situation in which he has met me through no *short* life, he was always plain, direct, sincere, and steady. He never truckled to the diurnal dispensers of an actor's fame — he could not flatter, and he did not care for flatterers. He performed, as a manager, a hundred kind acts without ostentation; and your interest never drooped in his hands, nor slept in his custody. If I were to inscribe his grave, I would do it in the eulogy pronounced by Lear upon his faithful Kent, his Caius, —

"'Twas a rough Honesty."

The order of this work compels me again to speak of myself; but the recommendation of the illustrious doctor, just commemorated, shall be attended to.

"On their own merits MODEST men are *dumb*."

Hitherto I had written nothing for the summer Theatre. I sent, through that worthy man, Waldron, the Italian Monk to Mr. Colman. He told me that he liked it much, and that he would bring it out with all the care that could be given to it; and that as far as the means of a little theatre and a short season would go, decoration as to scenery and dresses was at my command. Marinari invented some beautiful Italian landscape for the piece, and it came into rehearsal under favourable auspices. Dr. Arnold looked into Gluck for a sublime chorus of nuns, and wrote, himself, in a very powerful manner. The piece was strongly cast, and Palmer was pleased with the character of Schedoni. All however rested upon him, and Colman told me in my ear, that "I must take care of "him, or he would not know one word of it." I got hold of him one day and secured him effectually. I told him "that Schedoni offered to him an oppor- "tunity of showing both his manager and the "public that it was not absolutely necessary to "engage Mr. Elliston for tragedy of any strength, "while HE was in the Theatre." His indolence was banished at once; after rehearsals he twice begged that I would read Schedoni to him in his dressing-room; he used his pencil frequently as to emphasis, and occasionally asked the reason of any conception differing from his own. To the astonishment of the manager and the whole company, he went through the character, on the last rehearsal

but two, quite perfect in the words, with the part undisturbed peeping out of his coat pocket. Colman said, slily, "You are safe. He is in earnest." And he was really so; he acted it beautifully, so as to draw tears from George Steevens, who honoured me by his presence. But it was altogether fortunate. I had been the means of drawing forth some unsuspected declamation from that charming young actress, Miss Decamp. I received her, I remember, at the wing, as she came off the stage as Rosalba, in triumph, with an applause from the house following her for some minutes; and her grateful feeling led her to say openly, "Dear Sir, "you will make my fortune, if you write for me in "this manner." There is something in dramatic success so intoxicating, that even the profits of your achievement come but coldly after it.

Mr. Kemble's brother Charles acted Vivaldi in the play, and was rapidly advancing in the art. It was not very difficult at this time to see the strong interest which he felt in the success of my heroine; and the green room of the Haymarket arranged, by anticipation, the union, that some years after took place between him and Miss Decamp.

The winter season of 1797-8 opened under circumstances extremely unfavourable. Among the novelties, which secured permanent reputation in the art, I remember Mrs. Litchfield with sincere pleasure. She acted at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 20th of September, Marianne in the Drama-

tist, a character of great sprightliness; but her true powers were in the train of the sister muse. Had she been favoured with a figure rising to the majestic, and features of greater prominence, the powers of her mind, so seconded, would, perhaps, still have retained her in the very highest rank of tragedy.

Some aid the manager hoped to find in the return of Mrs. Abington to the scene of her former victories; but her person had become full, and her elegance somewhat unfashionable; yet she still gave to Shakspeare's Beatrice what no other actress in my time has ever conceived; and her old admirers were willing to fancy her as unimpaired by time as the character itself. Colman, to introduce her, wrote one of the happiest prologues in my remembrance. A few points I shall try to preserve — a degree of attention which he himself may not feel disposed to pay to these temporary effusions. The first thought is tender.

> "When melancholy counts each friend gone by,
> True as religion strings her ROSARY;
> The eye grows moist for many in silence laid,
> And drops that *bead*, which nature's self has made."

Time and casualty ravage the mimic world with the fury even of war.

> "Here death to a chill grave some actor carries,
> Here Hymen beckons, — and an actress marries."

Can we not, to supply these chasms, lure back some favourite of the comic muse?

> "Thalia calls — and Abington appears:
> Yes, Abington — too long we've been without her,
> With all the school of Garrick still about her.
> Mature in pow'rs, in playful fancy vernal, —
> For NATURE, *charming* nature, is *eternal*."

Mr. Harris brought out, on the 12th and 13th of October, two young actresses of very superior merit — Miss Betterton, since Mrs. Glover, in Elwina; and Mrs. Spencer, afterwards Mr. Pope's second wife, in Monimia. For the first of these ladies I had fancied the succession to Mrs. Abington in comedy; to the second, some venerable admirers assigned the innocent sensibility and pathetic sweetness of Mrs. Cibber. How far the conveyance of the rich gift was perfected, I really am too *young* to judge. Mrs. Spencer was a very lovely woman, and a very interesting actress.

The reader sees here what he will find to be invariable in stage history, that, whenever any accomplished actor or actress dies, TWO, at least, must be engaged to supply the place — FIVE, frequently, to compensate the loss. At Drury Lane, Wroughton had to look about him on Miss Farren's retirement, and his search produced two actresses of the second and fourth rates — Miss Biggs and Mrs. Humphreys; but Mercutio will touch it for us in the way of comparison. "Laura to his

"LADY was but a kitchen-wench, Dido a dowdy,
"Cleopatra a gipsy, Helen and Hero hildings
"and harlots: Thisbe a grey eye or so, but *not to*
"*the purpose.*"

Reynolds was now a seeming transfer to Drury Lane Theatre, and on the 21st of October produced a second comedy, called *Cheap Living*. The title of the play proceeds from the character of Sponge, performed by Bannister, Jun. But the hopes of the piece were on the youthful shoulders of Sir Edward Bloomley, an adept, at sixteen, in all the fashionable vices, and acted by Mrs. Jordan. The baronet is also as wise as he is wanton, which the author, on *this* occasion, certainly was *not*.

Mrs. Crawford returned again to Covent Garden Theatre, on the 23d of this month, to act Lady Randolph to the Young Norval of Harry Johnstone. As Reynolds's mother was the particular friend of that great actress, I wonder he did not prevail upon her to save the growing infirmities of age from recollection so injurious to her present appearance.

There was a benefit, as usual, for the sufferers by the victory of Lord Duncan over the Dutch Admiral Winter, whose letter to his masters, written on board the ship of his conqueror, is one of the most pathetic things in all history. Cumberland wrote an Address for Drury Lane, spoken by Wroughton, but inferior to Richardson's upon Lord Howe's success.

Cumberland seemed to be now writing, *vice* Reynolds, at Covent Garden — for in his False Impressions, a comedy acted on the 23d of November, though the fable and the characters were only his novel of Henry produced in action, yet the action was brisker than he allowed himself previously, and he seemed to be complying, against nature, with the prevalent taste. His persons of the drama were few, but Miss Betterton, in Emily Fitz-Allen, had the best of them.

The Drury Lane management was now at its wits end, when a lucky hit by *Monk* Lewis, as he was called from his romance, filled the treasury nightly. I allude to his dramatic romance, called the *Castle Spectre*, acted for the first time (the *last* is not yet known) on the 14th of December 1797. But it is too strongly impressed upon the memories of all my readers to require in this place any detail of its story. The precedent given by myself was followed with beautiful effect, and I yet bring before me, with delight, the waving form of Mrs. Powell, advancing from the suddenly illuminated chapel, and bending over Angela (Mrs. Jordan) in maternal benediction; during which slow and solemn action, the band played a few bars, or rather the full *subject* at all events, of Jomelli's *Chaconne*, in his celebrated overture in three flats. Pardon, my dear Kemble, the captivation of an unearthly music. I will attend upon Percy and yourself immediately.

There was one remarkable point of character in

Mr. Kemble; that, *out* of the management, and where responsibility was upon others, he was the gentlest of all great actors — "He would DO *anything*." So that when he was cast into Percy, in the present piece, a sort of Harlequin hero, who gets into his enemy's castle after his Columbine, Angela; he had to climb from a sofa to a Gothic window, and, being alarmed by his *black* guards, he has to fall from the height flat again at his length upon the said sofa, and seem asleep, as they had before seen him. This he did, as boldly and suddenly, as if he had been shot. When people complimented him upon his unsuspected agility, "Nay, he used "to say, gentlemen, Mr. Boaden has exceeded all "compliment upon *this* feat of mine, for he coun- "selled me from Macbeth, to

"Jump *the life to come*."

But it was melancholy to see the abuse of such talents. It is only in a barn, that the CATO of a company should be allowed to risk his *neck*.

Morton, on the 11th of January 1798, again met with his usual success at Covent Garden Theatre. His *Secrets worth knowing* were later wills to dispossess sordid wretches presuming themselves heirs, and papers entitling the needy to considerable affluence. This comedy has not kept its station so firmly as his *Way to get Married*, *Cure for the Heart-ache*, and *Speed the Plough*; but, at

the time, was thought to be not at all inferior to his other productions.

The critic, who, in the preface to the Iron Chest, had made himself so merry with the ponderous machinery, the splendid processions, the elephants and the triumphal cars of Drury Lane Theatre, was induced to lend himself to the great work of corrupting the public taste, and succeeded beyond all competition in the dramatic romance of Blue Beard. This nursery tale no doubt was intended to repress female curiosity. It is dramatically drawn out by Mr. Colman, with striking effect and occasional pleasantry. The music, by Kelly, was remarkably well conceived, and the parts were all acted in the happiest manner imaginable. But one of the performers made herself a fame out of it so absolute and engrossing, that perhaps it was injurious to the fascinating actress, and stopped her progress in the profession. I allude to the Irene of Miss Decamp. The personal display, the ballet action, the turret, and the piercing tones of her voice, conspired to establish a scale of her merits from which it was hardly possible to descend. The public acquired a taste for her in pantomimic exhibition, and they have never encouraged, to their value, the greater qualities that she possessed.

As to the stage preparations of the piece, they hung fearfully the first night; and Colman, as before, needed curtailment. But the scenery and dresses were really splendid, and the machinery in-

genious. It got smooth by repetition, and must have brought immense receipts into the house. With such singers as Crouch, Decamp, Bland and Kelly, must be remembered the rare skill of Suett, whose notes on the words "I'll not hear you," were clear, distinct, and true beyond all comparison. I have had enough, perhaps too much, of *imitations* in my life; but as to poor Suett, always resembled, let me say, that Caulfield was, by the very side of him, absolutely *another self*. Mr. Holcroft not only occupied the stage of Drury Lane, on the 25th of January, by his comedy of *Knave or not*, but is believed to be the real author of another at Covent Garden, on the 13th of February, called *He's much to Blame*. Of these the latter was the livelier production. The diligence and variety of Holcroft were astonishing. The favourite theme of his school was the *energies of mind*. He possessed himself a share, among ourselves, at all events, quite unexampled. The facility of Lope de Vega would be incredible, but for the compositions actually printed.

We left Mr. Kemble enjoying the fame of his *agility* in the Castle Spectre. The doctrine of compensations is true in the dramatic world as well as the moral; both his head and his heart were soon to experience a very serious call indeed; I allude to the preparation and performance of the *Stranger*. Although I had many times perceived, upon entering his library, pretty strong indications

of the present study, yet I certainly never knew any other take such severe hold upon his countenance and general manner. He relapsed from his usual kindness into gloomy abstraction; and admirably neat as he was in general, I saw for some days a carelessness about his person.* On the 24th of March, the result astonished the town in the performance of one of his finest efforts, the *Stranger* of Kotzebue.

The tendency of this play is, I presume, what it has been styled, immoral. Our sympathy with Mrs. Haller may be generous or just, as you will; but the wretched victim of perfidy, the silent record of unutterable anguish, the Stranger, as he looked and moved in Kemble, was of all exhibitions that I have ever seen, the most affecting.

The popularity of the Stranger made it a subject of contention. The acted play was the translation of Thompson, who has given to English readers all the really valuable plays of the German theatre. But there were others, I presume, equally skilled in the German, among whom was a Mr. Schinck, probably himself a native, and this gentleman had sent his own translation to Drury Lane about a year and a half earlier, and received it back most likely

* In his cloaths and dress Mr. Kemble preserved the Ciceronian medium, "a perpetual cleanliness, without the appear-
" ance of pains; free from the affectation of singularity; and
" avoiding the extremes of a rustic negligence, and foppish
" delicacy."

unread, and with such an excuse as it suited the mood or the business of the time to give it. Mr. Schinck had saved the honour of Mrs. Haller. "She had eloped, a frightful crime! but saw her "error just before the purpose of her seducer was "accomplished." Thompson, thinking rightly, that the distress must be less as the crime was lowered, left her story as he found it. From any unfair proceeding as to Mr. Schinck he sufficiently vindicates himself; but he literally owed his reception to the good fortune of sending his piece to Mr. GRUBB, whom the great angler had now hooked into the concern. He was a good-natured person, sufficiently humble not to be too busy; and he was allowed occasionally to advance an *opinion*, but more frequently his *money*. Mr. Grubb put it into the hand of Sheridan, with, I suppose, a request that he would *read it*. I dare say it was the first German play he ever *did* read; he became fond of the interest, and touched upon the language occasionally; and a most pathetic song for Mrs. Bland, written by Sheridan, "*I have a silent sorrow*," and sung in the Stranger's hearing, thrilled to every heart, in a *melody* from the genius of the Duchess of Devonshire.

I suppose I shall be accused of *heresy* from the true faith, but I have no sort of doubt that Mrs. Haller, as a great part for a performer, is incalculably inferior to the Stranger. It is hardly a *character* — it is never distinguished by manner.

Mrs. Haller superintends the family, takes a walk in the park, sends out her heart in charity, as some alleviation to the silent sorrow that preys upon it, but the forms of life invest her — she must control even her countenance. She has sinned beyond forgiveness, and hopes to steal though life in penance and unknown. I have no doubt that, on the first night, Mrs. Siddons felt all this greatly enfeebling her exertion, for she certainly sunk under her brother. The triumphant success of the piece, and the sure sympathy that waited upon her *tears* in the great scene, raised the whole by degrees to a respectable level; but the grandeur, the intellectual dignity of the person, all assured you, that Mrs. Haller herself must have been as different a being from Mrs. Siddons, as Lavater could have drawn, had he intended to exemplify the two qualities of fortitude and weakness. Let us look a little at the account that this lady gives us of herself. "She knows that her husband's "confidence in deceitful friends, and the great ex- "pences that she herself occasioned, had embar- "rassed his circumstances and clouded his spirits. "Yet, instead of curbing him in the lavish outlay "of his fondness, she thinks — (hear it, ye worship- "pers of Mrs. Haller!) she THINKS, that he denies "her pleasures and amusements *still within their* "*reach.* She accordingly begins to fancy him "cold — she has lived with him three years; she "has borne to him the pledges of their mutual

" love; — yet this wife, this mother, listens to a " man who had not even the usual captivations of " his craft (for she tells you that in every thing " that merits either *admiration, respect, or love,* he " was far, far *beneath* her husband); she believes " the tale of that husband's love for some other " woman; looks at a few forged letters; demands " no explanation; pursues him to no detection; " but elopes, as a thing of course, with her seducer, " tears away their mother from the unoffending in- " fants, and in a few weeks finds out that she is a " wretch." Spirit of the lovely IMOGEN, speak to this woman, and to thousands more, the noble, the beautiful rebuke given to Iachimo, who had planned precisely the same attack, and adduced himself as the witness of the disloyalty in Posthumus, which he reported!

> " Away! I do condemn mine ears, that have
> So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,
> Thou woulds't have told this tale for VIRTUE, not
> For such an end thou seek'st, as *base* as strange."

What could there remain in such a profligate as this, of either sound principle or just feeling *,

* Hear the purest spirit of modern times, Cowper.

> " Virtue and vice had boundaries in old time
> Not to be passed: and she, that had renounced
> Her sex's honour, was renounced herself
> By all that prized it; not for prudery's sake,
> But dignity's, resentful of the wrong.
> 'Twas

worth disentangling from the fatal web that either pleasure or credulity had wound about her? Had the author lowered the husband to the worthy man of plain exterior and retired habits, and invested the seducer with all those personal captivations that by their power over the senses corrupt the reason, and silence the conscience, an apology might rise (a bad one in truth,) proportioned to the temptation, and irregular passion really, at length, expire at the feet of returning virtue. But here are PROFUSION in a husband's *difficulty*, and ADULTERY without *passion;* two features of depravity, that pronounce the head and the heart of woman utterly worthless.

But enough of the lady. Let me endeavour to describe Mr. Kemble in her husband. The great and peculiar merit of him then was, that the bye-play, as it is termed, was a language constantly displaying the character, and suitable to that alone. He had weighed everything — he had calculated every gesture through the piece. The utterance was equal to the action. Some beauties, by their prominence, start from my general recollection, and a few shall have such a feeble record as I can

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'Twas hard perhaps, on here and there a waif,
Desirous to return, and not received:
But was an wholesome rigour in the main,
And taught th' unblemished to preserve with care
That purity, whose loss was loss of ALL."

Task, Book iii.

give of them. Upon a harsh impeachment of his honest servant's motives, R. Palmer said to him, and well said it, "Sir, that did not come from "your heart." The answer of goodness betrayed into injustice, simple, at once, and final, is, "For-"GIVE ME." Kemble's look, his sigh, his tone in this ejaculation, was his whole history conveyed in two short words.

Another beauty of his masterly elocution courted the nice ear, when his former friend Steinfort, in the ardour of affectionate surprise, exclaims, on seeing him, "CHARLES!" Kemble's rejoinder, "Steinfort!" was equally removed from either surprise or joy; all emotions but of one class had died away, and he bore in *that* a living death about him.

But there was a beauty of action in the scene with his wife, that showed how happily he evinced the most refined delicacy; and how his very *hands* spoke, what could in no way be conveyed by language. When the Countess has put into his possession the details of her infamy, that he may divorce himself from her polluted person,—the *pause* for a few seconds; the *deliberate tearing* of the papers; and the way in which he let them *escape* rather than threw them from his hands; were so consummate a proof of his feeling and judgment, that it remains before me with no parallel in any other performance.

I have been the fuller upon this occasion, be-

cause as succeeding actors do and must form themselves on this great model, all that is now to be seen is certainly Kemble's, as well as what will never be seen again. I will suppose, (I shall not hastily *allow* it) that the *minds* of some among his successors may be equal to his; but a countenance *as* expressive does not exist; nor a figure, near to the stage requisites of his form. As I love on most occasions to *ascertain* causes fully adequate to the effects, so I mention among those contributing to the perfection of Mr. Kemble's *Stranger*, his actual freedom from the toils of management. It left him with a single object; and here we had the full benefit of his abstraction. I do not think that he ever equalled his first performance of the Stranger.

As I have every *proper* regard for Sheridan, I wish Thompson, when he printed the play, had been either so kind or just as to inform us WHAT specifically were those alterations and additions by which, as he allows, the effect of the play was so improved. The POCO PIU, the little heightenings of so great a master, should be known. It was thus in Henry the Sixth, that Shakspeare went over the work of Marlow.

From dramatic genius, thus heightened by every care that could attend upon it, I am to descend to one of Cumberland's fading shadows of life, a comedy called *The Eccentric Lover*, who appeared upon the stage of Covent Garden Theatre

on the 30th of April, but, upon the opportune illness of Quick,

> " Shrunk in haste away,
> And vanish'd from our sight."

On the 12th of May, a daughter of Mr. Murray's acted Perdita for her father's benefit, and displayed talent of the right sort. This young lady, in the year 1802, became the daughter-in-law of Mrs. Siddons, by a marriage with her eldest son.

The rest of the winter season displayed a little novelty among the benefits, but very little talent.— O'Keefe failed in a comedy for Mrs. Jordan, called, rightly, She's Eloped — it was heard of no more. Smith returned for a night to act *Charles* for his friend King's benefit, and except a slight failure about the legs, I thought him quite unimpaired either in figure or spirits, by a recess of ten years.

The Haymarket season of 1798 opened with a new farce by Colman, called Blue Devils, from the French of Patrat; it is a sketch of English gloom, in the person of a Mr. Megrim, meditating suicide, from absolute weariness of existence. He is relieved from his doldrum by opportunities presented to him of making others happy. This reminds me of a more interesting fable worked up with great skill, which that enchanting creature Le Texier read once to us at Lisle Street in manuscript. —

The master of a poor inn is burdened with the presence of a yet poorer poet, and would put an end to his daily supplies,

but for the opposition of his wife, whose vanity is gratified occasionally by the poet's numbers. Matters, however, are proceeding fast towards his ejectment, when a stranger guest, of a most portentous exterior, whom they discriminate only as *L'homme noir*, attracts our poet's attention. The stranger inveighs against the miseries of existence, and touches in a masterly way those of the scribbler before him. The poet dines with the man in black, and dispatches the contents of the dishes with that extravagant voracity, which lays in for appetites to come. The last cover being removed, a brace of pistols display themselves, and the English miserable invites the French to close life's feast, agreeably to the November ritual, by the bullet. But self-destruction is by no means the passion of the French poet. However, he does not venture to dispute its propriety — he only wishes to delay the consummation until he hears the fate of a dramatic sketch that he has presented to the theatre. The man in black considers this to be but reasonable, and *en attendant* requests to be indulged with a hearing of the drama. The poet promises to read the piece to him, and they separate.

At the appointed time the bard comes fully prepared, takes his seat before his sable friend, and commences the reading with a *catalogue raisonné* of the persons and their business in the drama. The scene, I need not say, is that of their own *auberge*—he describes the host, the hostess, himself, and then the English hypochondriac by his name, JOHNSON.—An involuntary astonishment bursts from the lips of the hearer, who is then informed of the circumstances under which he left his family, and they are all described, the wife, the daughter, nay, the *fille de chambre* is not forgotten;—they arrive, it is said, at the inn, in search of their unhappy friend. — The door of the room in which they are sitting here suddenly opens, and the persons who enter are of course no creatures of the poet's brain, but the actual family of our melancholy countryman, whom the poet had seen on their arrival, and whose business his usual address had elicited. His happy invention suggests to him this dramatic introduction of the travellers; but all anticipation by the audience is carefully avoided.

Le Texier read this, as he did every thing, inimitably. Whether he himself was the author, I did not ask at the time, and since have enquired in vain. Mrs. Piozzi, when on her travels, met with, I suppose, *Patrat's* sketch, and said Andrews should have it. Le Texier's she has not alluded to, and probably never saw.

The Castle Spectre had given an agreeable picture to the lovers of the marvellous, and I had turned my attention to a rival shade, taking care to supply an adequate cause for supernatural interposition. I had also, in the bold resistance of Llewellyn to our Edward, an opportunity of meeting the menaces of foreign invasion, in the year 1798, with patriot sentiment, and I had in the Bards of Cambria, the means of showing the bard of Gray in action, with all the aids of appropriate scenery, dress, and music. I drew the real habiliments of the bards, by his permission, from Mr. Fuseli's sketch-book; and Johnston, the machinist, came from Drury Lane Theatre to superintend all our equipments. By the parallel, I carried up my shade through the grand window of the cathedral, and some very admirably painted clouds devolved about the figure contrived by Marinari. — We prospered, and upon a hasty revisal of my play, I am tempted to say that it contains some passages which I am not even now displeased to have written. But Mr. Kemble, I remember, wrote to inform me, that they had been commended to him

by his friend Jackson of Exeter, an elegant critic, and a composer superior to any praise of mine.

While we were in rehearsal, Mr. Palmer one morning came upon the stage, and took me aside. "He said that he could not quit London without "in a particular manner thanking me for the part "of Schedoni. He expressed his concern that he "could not aid me on the present occasion; and "with very singular emotion, wished that I might "always meet with men as sensible to kindness as "he himself should ever be." He even wrung me by the hand, and took his leave in haste and in tears. I should perhaps have thought of this but as "a trick of custom," and so it might really be: but I know nothing of the secret anticipations of the mind. Palmer quitted London to return to it NO MORE, for on the second of August he expired suddenly on the stage at Liverpool, while acting the character of the Stranger. On the 29th of July, he dined with some friends belonging to the company, and appeared to be low spirited; but on Wednesday, the 1st of August, he gave the Lyar, with all the vivacity of earlier days. On the 2nd, to a very genteel audience, he acted the character of the Stranger with powerful effect, till he came in the third act to the remarkable passage—

"There is *another* and a *better* world."

He had no sooner uttered the words, than he fell

backwards, heaved a convulsive sigh, and immediately expired. He was carried off the stage, and surgical aid speedily procured, but the veins yielded not a drop of blood. Aickin endeavoured to make the audience acquainted with his death, but was unable to articulate a single word. They were informed of their great loss by Incledon.

On the 6th of August, 1798, he was buried at Warton, a village near Liverpool, and all the coaches that could be obtained followed his hearse. Mr. Palmer was the most general actor that ever lived. He was, after Henderson, the best Falstaff and Comus; he was the *only* Sir Toby Belch, Stukely, Surface, Sneer, Villeroy. In the long list of tyrants in tragedy, and fine gentlemen in comedy, he was better, oh, how much better, than all other men! and in the *Brushes* and *Duke's Servants*, the *Lyar*, and a myriad of others, beyond even the hope of an author. I should put his age at near 57. Palmer, before the unfortunate business of the Royalty Theatre, had indulged himself in rather expensive habits, and at his house in Kentish Town, seemed to affect the splendid hospitalities of Barry. His noble figure and graceful manners threw him into a variety of temptations, difficult to be resisted, and sworn foes to professional diligence and severe study. But, such as he *was*, during the whole of his course as an actor, he was fairly entitled to the greatest salary in the theatre, as he combined the

most general utility with talent often surprising, frequently excellent, and always respectable.

The Liverpool Theatre, on the 13th, gave a free benefit to the children of Mr. Palmer, and Holman spoke an address upon the occasion written by Mr. Roscoe — there is too much of it — it is exceedingly metaphysical — but has some nervous lines. This proper example was followed in town by the summer company, who went over to the Opera-house on the 18th of August, and there acted the *Heir at Law* and the *Children in the Wood*, for the benefit of the four youngest Orphans; and Drury Lane Theatre on its first night, the 15th of September, with melancholy propriety, performed the *Stranger* itself, with Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, for the same object. In the farce Mrs. Jordan and Bannister both gave their aid, and the Citizen detained a very crowded audience to the "last scene of all."

CHAP. XII.

WINTER SEASON OF 1798-9. — MR. KEMBLE OPENS WITH THE STRANGER. — EMERY COMES FROM YORK. — KOTZEBUE. — LOVERS' VOWS. — RAMAH DROOG. — NOVELTIES. — REYNOLDS RETURNS TO COVENT GARDEN. — LAUGH WHEN YOU CAN. — AURELIO AND MIRANDA. — THE AUTHOR'S ACCOUNT OF IT. — KEMBLE MOST KIND AS WELL AS EXCELLENT. — HOLMAN, VOTARY OF WEALTH. — FEUDAL TIMES. — MR. MORRIS. — KOTZEBUE'S BIRTH DAY. — MR. KEMBLE IN MONTVAL. — PIZARRO, DONE BY SHERIDAN HIMSELF. — THE STRANGE PROLOGUE. — SHERIDAN'S FEELINGS DURING ITS PERFORMANCE. — KEMBLE IN ROLLA. — MRS. JORDAN. — MRS. SIDDONS. — ELVIRA CONSIDERED. — SUCCESS OF THE PLAY — POLITICAL FEELINGS. — MR. PITT. — PLAY PRINTED. — COLMAN'S. — NOVELTIES THERE. — FÊTE AT FROGMORE. — REFLECTIONS.

I HAVE already informed the reader that the winter season of 1798–9 opened with the Stranger. The common notion was, that the last words uttered by poor Palmer were parts of a passage commencing with an apostrophe to the Deity, and that the *agony* attending their delivery had destroyed the actor. The house was therefore in considerable

alarm till the *real* Stranger had got over words that had proved so fatal. And some degree of surprise *buzzed* along the seats when Mr. Kemble, in the proper tone of resignation, uttered the calm address to Francis, in the first scene of the third act:

Stranger.

"Have you forgotten what the old man said this morning?
There is another and a better world!' Oh, 'twas true.
Then let us hope with fervency, and yet endure with patience!"

From the Bath or the York companies, most of our great actors have proceeded. There is little mystery in this: the demand for excellence usually finds it or creates it. We had Mrs. Siddons from Bath; Mr. Kemble from York. By this I mean to say, that Bath and York were the scenes of their greatest popularity — their theatric *homes*. From York we had received an excellent actor in Fawcett, and were to owe another, more limited, but equally perfect, in Emery. He had found in the rustics of Morton, matter remarkably suited to his talents; and in truth he was destined to exhibit the entire range of his ability in that author's comedies — from *Frank Oatlands* to his *Bobby Tike*, exhausts nearly the whole *soul* of the countryman, and the *art* of Emery. His Caliban was a brute, it is true, and what he should not have been, a Yorkshire one; but there was no poetry in his conception of the character. It has been always *roared* down the

throats of the vulgar; but Caliban is not a vulgar creation. It is of "imagination all compact."

We had now begun the long line of Kotzebue's dramas, and the *passion* always found about them ensured their success, if even respectably acted. Mrs. Inchbald brought out *Lovers' Vows*, at Covent Garden, on the 11th of October. Frederick was supported by Pope, and the Agatha and Amelia by the Mrs. Johnson from America, and Mrs. Johnstone, the wife of Henry Johnstone, a lady of very considerable merit in melo dramas. With any other merits or demerits the world has sufficiently amused itself, to be tired, I hope, by this time of the subject.

My old friend Taylor, who has written *more* prologues in *less* time than any bard that ever did live, on the occasion of *Lovers' Vows* supplied one of his best. The allusion to all our *Spectres* is very happy and *pointed*—

"The monstrous charms of terrible delight."

Mr. Palmer, of the Temple, sent on Munden, the rhyming Butler of the play, with an epilogue of about seventy rambling, but sufficiently ludicrous verses.

The glorious victory of the *Nile* was in course to be dramatised, and T. Dibdin launched a pantomimic entertainment of song, dance, and dialogue, at Covent Garden, on the 25th of October. Cumberland, catching at something between Cowley and

Dryden, supplied a prologue, spoken with great animation by H. Johnstone.

At the same theatre, on the 12th of November, Cobb, with some of his India knowledge, brought us entertainment from the Malabar coast; and his comic opera of *Ramah Droog* flourished like an adventure of Bandannoes and Pullicat Romals. The females of this piece are all of them unknown to fame, but their names look astonishing in stage history. Mrs. Mills and Mrs. Chapman, with the six Misses Mitchell, Waters, Sims, Gray, Wheatley and Walcup, and, I hope, in the language of that great stage manager, Peter Quince, "here is an opera fitted." It had one charm of great value about it: namely, that Richards painted a series of scenes from the exquisite designs of Daniel, made, as every body knows, by him in India.

At Drury Lane, Prince Hoare translated and adapted the French piece of *Camille*, or *le Souterrain;* and with some clever scenery, and music by Dussek, a man of science and invention, it was successful under the title of the *Captive of Spilburg*. Dussek, sitting in society at the piano forte, and *improvising* upon the *progress* and *succession* of the PASSIONS, was an object of perfect astonishment, and never to be forgotten.

Mr. Cumberland followed on the 5th of December, with a comedy called, *A Word for Nature;* it was but a word. It had the slightest of all his plots, nothing whatever of character, and the

interest was never the subject of the smallest doubt or alarm through the whole five acts.

At Covent Garden, Dibdin, with a most diverting farce, called the *Jew and the Doctor*, preceded the return of Reynolds on the 8th of December to his head quarters. His title was a lesson equal to any in Cornaro's treatise, *Laugh when you Can.* Here he had all his tried friends; Lewis lighter than air in *Gossamer*, and Fawcett in *Sambo*, and a *Bonus* in Munden; — Holman, the Popes, the Mattocks, the Gibbs, and in Emily, Miss Mansell. Madame Genlis's Souterrain was to have the honours of both our houses, and Cobb's Albert and Adelaide, the rival of the Captive of Spilburg, was done at Covent Garden on the 11th. It was a useful AFTER-piece, and as every thing unfortunately now was, splendidly got up. Steibelt and Atwood between them furnished the music. We now half lived upon the Germans and the French; and our native drama was estimated as a very secondary business indeed by managers, who turned their authors to foreign plays, foreign spectacles, foreign romances — to every thing *foreign* to English habits, feelings, and character.

I had hitherto never written a part for a man, entitled by his friendship as well as talent to every attention from me. The masterly presentment of Ambrosio in the Monk, by Mr. Lewis, though not original*, struck me forcibly in the perusal, and I

* Without travelling farther back, *Ambrosio* and his *temptations* may be found under the names of Father Henrick and

worked, as I thought, rather successfully upon the subject, in a sort of Colman drama of three acts. I showed it to Mr. Kemble, and he at once decided that he would act the monk. "But," he said, "why *three* acts? Why innovate upon esta- "blished usage? — a play should be in five acts, "for this sound reason among others, that it "affords *four* pauses; and consequently the RE- "LIEF which is necessary to the attention. In a "full piece you *must* occupy the usual three "hours, and you create a heaviness by compelling "the audience to listen to an uninterrupted busi- "ness, or act, one hour long. Don't tell me that "there may not be matter enough in your subject "for *five* acts; because then I ask how you expect "to be endured, if you make business only sufficient "for three acts occupy the *time* of five?" To all this I really had no good reply, and consequently made none at all. He himself suggested some *additional interest*, and Aurelio and Miranda went, through Wroughton, to Mr. Sheridan himself. He read it with great kindness, and wrote his opinion in the margin of every scene. Of many parts he expressed decided admiration — he gave me but little additional trouble. The play was

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Miranda, in the novel called the *Fair Jilt*, written by Mrs. Aphra Behn. Mr. Kemble's recollection of her writings, and of this particular story, made him assign the name of *Miranda* to my heroine; and might lead him to suggest the *high birth* of the friar as a ground for dispensing him from his vows, and ultimately uniting him to Miranda.

accepted, and Mr. Siddons by letter informed me "that though Miranda was not quite so important "in the piece as Mrs. Siddons was accustomed to "be, yet that it was such a part as *they* should "never refuse, and that she would act it for me." All therefore looked successfully; the greatest dramatic genius admired my work, and the greatest theatric talent had resolved to act it. But it was weak in its structure; the two last acts were entirely an *hors d'œuvre;* and, what was worse than all, a storm of indignation was excited, that so *immoral* a work as the Monk should be resorted to for the purposes of an exhibition, however moral in its tendency. There were not wanting an *accident* or two to help on the work of prejudice; yet the play survived all opposition for seven nights, greatly applauded in its best scenes, but in my own judgment unfitted for a longer existence. It was first acted on the 29th of December, 1798.

Yet let me say, that all I had ever conceived of either the *dignity* or *sanctity* of the monacal order, was as nothing compared with the awful grace with which the whole figure of Kemble became invested.—The nearest resemblance that picture affords is to be found in a FORM, that it would be *irreverence* to name upon such an occasion as the present; but the expression of the head, and the folds of the drapery, seemed to be studied in the

transfiguration of Raphael. That noble gentleman, the late Duke of Leeds, came to me in the Green Room, and begged to present me to the Duchess in her box, though he candidly avowed that his *religious feelings* hardly allowed him to tolerate the powerful effects, which he saw produced upon the stage. But it was not only on the first night that Mr. Kemble displayed for me his highest powers — *prevention* as to the subject — *failure* in some weaker parts — *violent clamour* — all on this occasion were unheeded by him, and he exerted himself to the *last*, for his friend, the author, as if his own reputation were at stake, and somehow involved with the success of the play.

"For ALL our thanks."

I may mention that when, after the play, Mr. Kemble had put on his *lay* habiliments, and we were both admitted into Mrs. Siddons's dressing-room, our friend, the late Dr. Charles Burney, came in, and told us in few words, that "the subject was "fatal, and we should not do." I was myself decidedly of his opinion.

Holman, on the 5th of January 1799, presented the town with a comedy, called the *Votary of Wealth.* It is a satire against the irregular attainment of riches — where the passion renders the being who entertains it *false* in every thing, and the dearest of his friends is as certainly the prey of

his rapacity, as "the indifferent children of the earth." Mr. Holman, as usual, distinguished himself by some scenes powerfully written; but, in the general structure of the fable, he reminded one greatly of his two comic associates; and, indeed, they frequently wrote in conjunction. With all this the public had no concern; their entertainment was in the merit of the work, and there was certainly much interest in the Votary of Wealth. It is a singularity, but of the comic writers to whom I have alluded, the *strong* interest in their plays is hardly ever female — in this, looking to the *sympathy* of an audience, they would be in error, but that the comparative *talents* of the sexes in the Covent Garden company rendered their choice an affair of discretion.

It is so dangerous to attack! The even-handed justice of time usually makes to itself a sport, as well as a duty, to have the "Engineer hoisted with his own petard." So Mr. Colman, who had assailed Kemble as the translator of Lodoiska, now, I suppose, blushed to scribble over *Feudal Times*, in which Lodoiska itself was imitated, and the Castle Spectre and Blue Beard invited into his *Banquet Gallery*. Here was a *mine* sprung in the close of the piece with great effect. On the subject of this eternal stage practice, let me say, to the credit of their sappers and miners, that it invariably succeeds; and the conflagration of the fortress only lights the lovers to each others embraces. A *blow*

up at the end of a piece was formerly a metaphor and signified its perdition; it is now a reality, and ensures its success.

That ingenious gentleman, Mr. Morris, in his *Secret*, a comedy acted at Drury Lane Theatre on the 2d of March, wrote a very interesting part for Mrs. Jordan, called Rosa. It was now become no secret, that she rather inclined to the characters of deserted daughters, plundered orphans, and the whole family of sentiment, rather than to the indulgence of her own proper talent in the comedies of the last age.

The liberality of young Dibdin, on the 16th of this month, bestowed *Five Thousand a-year* upon Mr. Lewis for his benefit; of which that gay but most prudent manager took the proper care, and the town, for many nights together, congratulated him upon his success. To drop the allusion, the sketch of the interest of this comedy indicated at least *design*, and exemplified a common danger. The accession of a young gentleman to unexpected fortune leads to the prudent determination, on his part, to avoid the tempting baits of wine, play, altercation, and, above all, *love*. By very naturally contrived incitements he falls into every mischief he had resolved to shun, and the audience enjoyed the dilemmas of so provident a personage.

Kotzebue again supplied the theatre with permanent attraction. His *Birth Day* prepared for us, after city translation, by young Dibdin, was

acted inimitably by Munden, Fawcett, and Mrs. Davenport. The scenes between *Bertram* and *Junk*, in the hands of Munden and Fawcett, were as finely contested acting as I ever saw upon a stage. Though *naval* characters, they evidently sprung from the military pair in Tristram Shandy; yet there was positive genius in the appropriation, by Kotzebue, of our Yorick's greatest achievement.

Mr. Kemble had only one novelty of much consequence during the remainder of the season. For the Rev. T. S. Whalley, he acted the Old Count Montval, in a tragedy written on the subject of a father condemned to a dungeon by his son — and Mrs. Siddons the wife of the parricide. It was poetically written, but being, as to its fable, drawn from a popular French miscellany, and having been some time in the manager's hands, his dungeon interest had been anticipated in the Castle Spectre, and the reverend poet was partially defrauded of his effects. Whalley, if I remember rightly, was the friend of Pratt and Hayley; and of a better poet than either, Potter of Scarning, a man admired by Mr. Pitt — the unrivalled translator of Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

The novelty to which I have particularly alluded was the celebrated part of *Rolla*, in Sheridan's alteration of Kotzebue's Pizarro, a play of which the performance is never likely to cease, and of which the heroic character of Rolla is the *soul*. It

had been many months under the correction of Sheridan, who not only gave that sustained character to the dialogue, which a German sometimes invades by trivial or familiar language, but he added some very glowing thoughts occasionally, and a passage of infinite value in the address of Rolla to the Peruvian soldiers. As I do not remember that any critic has pointed out these *original* effusions of the mind of Sheridan; as they are moreover the *only* specimens of tragic composition from his pen; and, as the reader will subsequently find, were noticed by Mr. Pitt, I shall here insert the most prominent, to which Kotzebue never supplies more than a fit place to receive them. Perhaps the trial of Warren Hastings led him to fill his mind generally with images of the higher emotions, expressed in the richest terms, though not in the metre of poetry.

THE ADDRESS OF ROLLA TO HIS SOLDIERS.

(Act II. Sc. 2.)

"My brave associates — partners of my toil, my feelings and my fame! Can Rolla's words add vigour to the virtuous energies which inspire your hearts? — No — YOU have judged, as I have, the foulness of the crafty plea by which these bold invaders would delude you. — Your generous spirit has compared, as mine has, the motives, which, in a war like this, can animate THEIR minds, and OURS. THEY, by a strange frenzy driven, fight for power, for plunder, and extended rule — WE for our country, our altars, and our homes. — They follow an adventurer whom they fear, and obey a power which they hate. WE serve a Monarch whom we love — a God whom

we adore. Where'er they move in anger, desolation tracks their progress! — Where'er they pause in amity, affliction mourns their friendship! They boast, they come but to improve our state, enlarge our thoughts, and free us from the yoke of error! — Yes — THEY will give enlightened freedom to OUR minds, who are themselves the slaves of passion, avarice, and pride. They offer us their protection — Yes, such protection as vultures give to lambs — covering and devouring them! — They call on us to barter all of good we have inherited and proved, for the desperate chance of something better which they promise. Be our plain answer this: — The throne WE honour is the PEOPLE'S CHOICE — the laws we reverence are our brave fathers' legacy — the faith we follow teaches us to live in bonds of charity with all mankind, and die with hope of bliss beyond the grave. Tell your invaders this, and tell them, too, we seek no change; and least of all, such change as THEY would bring us."

Then that beautiful description of a mother's joys given to Cora, in the first scene of the second act —

Cora. "The extasy of his birth I pass, — that in part is selfish; but when first the white blossoms of his teeth appear, breaking the crimson buds that did incase them, — that is a day of joy: next, when from his father's arms he runs without support, and clings, laughing and delighted, to his mother's knee, — that is the mother's heart's next holiday: and sweeter still the third, whene'er his little stammering tongue shall utter the grateful sound of father! mother! — Oh! that is the dearest joy of all!"

Again, in that splendid soliloquy of Elvira's, at the end of the third act —

"'Tis well! 'tis just I should be humbled. — I had forgot myself, and in the cause of innocence assumed the tone of virtue;

'twas fit I should be rebuked — and by Pizarro. Fall, fall, ye few reluctant drops of weakness — the last these eyes shall ever shed. How a woman can love, Pizarro, thou hast known too well — how she can hate, thou hast yet to learn. Yes, thou undaunted! Thou whom yet no mortal hazard has appalled! Thou on Panama's brow didst make alliance with the raving elements, that tore the silence of that horrid night; when thou didst follow, as thy pioneer, the crashing thunder's drift, and stalking o'er the trembling earth, didst plant thy banner by the red volcano's mouth. Thou, who, when battling on the sea, and thy brave ship was blown to splinters, wast seen — as thou did'st bestride a fragment of the smoaking wreck — to wave thy glittering sword above thy head — as thou would'st defy the world in that extremity! — Come, fearless man — now meet the last and fellest peril of thy life — meet! and survive — an injured woman's fury, if thou canst."

Also that elegant apostrophe to nature, spoken by Rolla in the fourth act —

" O, holy nature! thou dost never plead in vain. There is not, of our earth, a creature bearing form, and life, human or savage — native of the forest wild, or giddy air — around whose parent bosom, THOU hast not a cord entwined of power to tie them to their offspring's claims, and at thy will to draw them back to thee. On *iron pinions* borne — the blood-stained VULTURE cleaves the storm — yet is the plumage closest to her heart *soft* as the cygnet's down, and o'er her unshell'd brood, the murmuring ring-dove sits not *more gently.*"

There are several other additions, but these are the most striking, and, from the first part of the second scene in the fifth act, the translation ceases, new incidents are introduced, and, excepting the death of Rolla, the conclusion is totally different; particularly in the re-appearance of Elvira, and the

fall of Pizarro, through her intervention. I am not quite sure, but I think he used a translation made for him by Mr. Geisweiler, a German possessing both languages, and who afterwards rendered Sheridan's alteration back into German, confronted page for page by the English. Every care was taken in the getting up of this splendid drama—scenery and dresses of the most striking beauty were invented, and Kelly, who prepared the music, introduced some very eloquent strains, which he had composed formerly, and they were always greatly admired. It was first acted on the 24th of May 1799. The original cast should be noted here. It shows that the reward of tractable diligence at length arrived. Alonzo was entrusted to Charles Kemble, who, in the third act in particular, rendered very important service.*

Pizarro, - - -	Barrymore.
Alonzo, - - -	C. Kemble.
Las Casas, - - -	Aickin.
Ataliba, - - -	Powell.
Rolla, - - -	KEMBLE.
Elvira, - - -	Siddons.
Cora, - - -	Jordan.

How unwillingly Sheridan always worked, may be judged by the following fact. Instead of preparing a prologue that should bear some remote

* Sheridan was so sensible of this, that for a long time afterwards he used to salute him as "*his* Alonzo."

reference to the interest of his play, he sent King on to speak one, written by himself, to be sure, but which had preceded Lady Craven's *Miniature Picture* in 1780.* It breathed of neither *heroism* nor *love* — but takes the *dust* in Rotten Row in the person of a cit on his hack Bucephalus; and, sauntring with white-rob'd Misses in Kensington Gardens, listens to the small questions of the promenade, so vastly usual, that they require no answer. The verses for music in this piece, I believe, were supplied by Grub, always happy to be employed.

Although in substance this play was Kotzebue's, yet Mr. Sheridan seemed to feel for it a full paternal solicitude. He sat in his box through the night with Richardson, in a state of unappeasable anxiety. The reader will hardly conceive the object of his *greatest* fear; but I tell it to him with the fullest knowledge of the fact. As to Mrs. Jordan in Cora, he was sufficiently miserable — "she could not speak a line of it;" but he was dissatisfied with Mrs. Siddons; she had not *fallen in* with his notion of the character; and at her

* Cicero, we are told, upon looking over his treatise on *Academic Philosophy*, discovered that he had used the same preface that he had prefixed to his book on *Glory*. It was his custom, it seems, to prepare at leisure a number of different proems, adapted to the general view of his studies, and ready to be applied to any of his works, which he should afterwards publish. Sheridan, I apprehend, did not abound in either *prefaces* or *prologues*.

opening of this precious piece of profligacy, he exclaimed, "*There*, there, I told you, Richardson, "that she never would fall into the character!" — and he was querulous to the last degree. With Kemble, however, he was perfectly transported; as HE declaimed, he said to Richardson, "Beautiful! sublime! perfection! nothing ever equalled THAT." At length the great actress burst through the embarrassment of her situation, and produced a strong feeling in the house; on which Richardson, a cooler judge, retorted his own terms upon him; and when he expressed his pleasure, and was beginning an—"*I told you*, Richardson," in another key, "YES," said his friend, "and remember *I told* YOU, "Sheridan, that she *would* fall into it at last."

Whether Mrs. Siddons would fall into the character, or fall with it, was not very long a question. She elevated Elvira even into *respect*; and, as her brother said to me, upon my praise of his Rolla, "NAY, nay, I have every thing to aid me; it *is* a "noble character. Carry your wonder to Mrs. "Siddons; she has made a heroine of a soldier's "*trull*."

The term used by my friend for this lady is somewhat strong, but a little reflection will leave it undisturbed. With the *glory* of Pizarro expired Elvira's love of him. Virtue of the noblest kind is, it seems, her passion. She meets in Rolla a being of the true temper: he has remained, at the risk of his

own life, that his friend might escape from prison. This admirer of glory labours by every art to convert him into an *assassin;* arms him herself for the occasion, and leads him into the conqueror's tent, that he may stab him as he lies asleep. Rolla is *himself,* and awakes Pizarro from his slumbers. Elvira is detected and imprisoned; but she makes her escape at a very critical juncture, and again arms Alonzo with a weapon, by which Pizarro is at last destroyed. She then, with infinite propriety, decides upon devoting herself to a religious life, to expiate her original foible. What the cloister might gain it is impossible to say; but it is sufficiently evident the *profane* world had no great loss of her.

I really do not wonder at Sheridan's doubt whether Mrs. Siddons *would* fall into such a character.

The noble portrait of Mr. Kemble bearing off the child, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, expresses most accurately the vigour and picturesque beauty of his action. The herculean effort of his strength — his passing the bridge — his preservation of the infant, though himself mortally wounded, excited a sensation of alarm and agony beyond any thing perhaps that the stage has exhibited. But, in truth, from his entrance to his death, the character was sustained with a power of elocution, a firmness of deportment, and an intensity of expression, that he alone could combine together.

All this excellence produced effects fully corresponding — Pizarro was acted thirty-one nights in succession, that is, leaving out the Sundays in course from the 24th of May to the 29th of June; the season did not close till the 4th of July. It may be observed that Addison's Cato, with all political factions to aid it, on its first run was acted only eighteen times. The continued performance of Pizarro was therefore, in the *serious* drama, up to that time unprecedented. Comedy and opera have been allowed, perhaps, in a few cases, an uninterrupted progress equal to this; but I presume tragedy to have intermitted, more on account of its superior fatigue, than from any inferiority of attraction.

There was a political point, of no mean importance, obvious in this play; we had Mr. Sheridan (*formerly* furious in the cause of France, invoking *destruction* upon the heads of the British Cabinet, and coveting for himself the "*blow of vengeance*,") now speaking with the heart and voice of his country, his perfect abhorrence of the conduct and the principles of revolution; and urging by every oratorical charm his countrymen to resist and disdain the arms and arts of France. If any very furious Whig, anxious for the political wisdom or the consistency of Sheridan, should remind me that this intruded harangue is in the character of a Peruvian, and its invectives pointed at a Spanish

invader; I think myself able to prove, that they were inserted *because* they applied to the condition of this country. If he were to add, that even this concluded nothing as to the *real* sentiments of Mr. Sheridan; I confess I should feel indifferent on that point, provided he allowed, as I think he must do, that, even in Mr. Sheridan's opinion, Rolla but uttered the feelings and the sentiments of the English people.

Among his audience Sheridan had the honour to number Mr. Pitt. The minister smiled significantly at the speech of Rolla; recognised some favorite figures, that he had *before* admired at the trial of Mr. Hastings; and pronounced Mr. Kemble to be "the NOBLEST ACTOR that he had ever seen."

The press sent forth 30,000 copies of this play, which was read with the greatest avidity; and the author, after it had brought at least fifteen thousand pounds into the theatre in its first season, in a strain of marital gallantry, not very usual among managers, declared that "Mrs. Sheridan's approbation and delight in its applause were to HIM the *highest* gratification its success had produced." Here, however, appeared to open a vein of wealth which, followed out with decent industry, might have relieved the theatre and its proprietor soon from a crowd of embarrassments; and yet I shall almost immediately have to show the usual want of resources, and the old menaces of retirement from

the *scene*, if money were not provided by the treasury.

The summer theatre presented to us the current rage. Kotzebue, and his *self immolation*, under the title of Family Distress. Pope sustained the miserable victim, Maxwell; and though the scene was laid in London, the spectator *doubted* that such complicated wretchedness could here attend an honest but unfortunate man. Yet in London does not the sharper seek an *associate* — does not the attorney find *false witness?* Is not the man absorbed in domestic affliction of his *own*, however inconsistently, indisposed to attend to that of *others?* All her charities, and she is among cities the first for charitable provision, all her charities must frequently fail to reach the timid and retiring virtue, abashed as well as ruined — destitute and silent.

The Castle of Sorrento, which Fawcett had fully prepared for, was extremely attractive *here*, and in Paris had been acted 60 nights in succession. Le Texier had employed his astonishing talent upon it during the winter. I think Fawcett heard him read it; nothing, however, could well be more effective than his own Blinval.

On the 30th of July, Prince Hoare fitted up another drama of Kotzebue's, called *Sighs!* or the Daughter. But he introduced a sort of *Cocker* in the person of *Totum*, calculated to exhibit the peculiar humour of Fawcett — and sent on him and

Mrs. Gibbs with an epilogue, written by himself it appeared, but that every body must have attributed to Colman, in which *numbers* were very pleasantly sported with from the *deuce* to the audience.

Holman, too, admiring strongly the *Robbers* of Schiller, produced an alteration under the title of the Redcross Knights, which came out on the 21st of August, and ran through the rest of the season. The little manager at the close, complained of the *growing* curtailment of his period, but he had encouragement from the public, and what he lost as a manager by the winter potentates, he contrived, as we have seen, to get back as an author.

The youngest daughter of their Majesties, the Princess Amelia, being recovered from a dangerous illness, her illustrious sister, the Princess Elizabeth, on the 7th of August, at Frogmore, planned an entertainment to the nobility on the occasion, and Mr. Wyatt was at hand to execute the design of her Royal Highness. The building was in the shape of a barn, and had three arched roofs or divisions supported by two rows of pillars. The middle space was allotted to the dancers; the sides to the company: all the effect was rustic. The chandeliers were, in form, bee-hives, crowned with wheat—the pillars were only the supporters of artificial flowers—and the very lamps were united by ropes of wheat interlacing blue-bells, violets, and lilies of the valley. The very chairs for the company were cottage furniture.

When a royal mind, accustomed to painted halls and gilded roofs, turns its fancy to some exquisite enjoyment, the scene of it we find is in a *cottage*, or a *barn*, and a *rush* chair is the greatest personal indulgence. Upon a variety of occasions an attentive observer will recollect an external sympathy of nature with remarkable events — all antiquity is uniform as to such singular accompaniments. This day of festivity was remarked for a deluge of rain that came down incessantly. The lovely OBJECT of the entertainment was not destined long to survive; and some circumstances attending her dissolution pressed so poignantly upon her venerable father, that a long night of reason succeeded and attended him to the grave.

In looking over my papers, as to what associates the above fête with theatrical history, I find that Quick, Mrs. Mattocks, and Elliston, were professionally employed — that Mrs. Mattocks screamed out Falstaff, and Mr. Elliston, in the character of Merlin (him of *Hanover* Square?) was, poor man, doomed to deliver some lines of superlative dulness, written with the best intention by a "*person of* "*honour*." The Princess Amelia was thus saluted —

"And thou, *sweet* maid, permit ME THEE to *greet*."

But the Princess of Orange came in for the choicest sweets of the muse.

"Thou, too, my *greetings shar'st*, respected Dame!
Soon shall BATAVIA's *land* thy presence claim."

The reader sees how happily on such occasions we had now forgotten HIM, who equalled Shakspeare in the *Masque of Queens;* and taught the lyric strain to Milton in the *Vision of Delight*, and a long succession of learned and elegant inventions, by which he charmed, and generally *employed*, the courts of James and Charles.

CHAP. XIII.

SEASON OF 1799–1800. — MORE DECORATIONS. — MANAGEMENT.—TURNPIKE GATE.— THE WISE MAN OF THE EAST. — THE EAST INDIAN — MR. KEMBLE ACTS IN IT. — OTHER NOVELTIES. — MODERN DRAMA FOUNDED ON MORAL PARADOX.—FATAL TENDENCY.—SPEED THE PLOUGH. — MISS BAILLIE. — DE MONFORT. — MR. KEMBLE. — PRINCE HOARE.— SEDUCTION. — LIBERAL OPINIONS. — ATTEMPT UPON THE KING'S LIFE — DESCRIBED. — HIS MAJESTY'S FIRMNESS.— THE ASSASSIN — HIS TRIAL — CONSIDERATIONS. — DEATH OF GEORGE STEEVENS. — CHARACTER OF HIM BY HAYLEY. — SKETCH OF HIM BY THE AUTHOR. — COLMAN'S.

On the 16th of September, Covent Garden Theatre opened for the season of 1799–1800, and Drury Lane on the day following. The former house again boasted of its *decorations*; but I really am heart-sick of this most childish folly, now grown into a ruinous evil. Cumberland wrote an address spoken by Pope, which must have astonished the audience. He told them that *their* triumphs had spread from the Texel to the Nile — that from Syria their career advanced, and stretched still onward from the spicy shore of Ceylon to the citadel of rich Mysore. He told them, moreover, that

their taste was to point the genius of the stage; and the actor added —

> " We are your servants — and it is agreed,
> SERVANTS should *follow* — MASTERS should *precede*."

Mischievous nonsense! the usual falsehood of those who debauch the public taste. We are your servants! To be sure. So was Shakspeare; but to *lead*, not follow, the people into rational and dignified amusements.

Reynolds, on the last day of October, brought out his comedy, called *Management*. Professional habits cling to a man. In going slightly, of course, over this author's fables, it is amusing to see the eternal recurrence of *bill*, *bond*, and *will* — the plaintiff, the bailiff, and the gaol. We have another of his *widows*, and a bad specimen of the order. — Mrs. Dazzle has a reversion of one hundred thousand pounds, if Juliana marries. As she is devoted to Lavish, a young spendthrift, the widow measures the young lady's purity by her own, and imagines that she will not, by the *church's aid*, divest herself of her fortune. She therefore agrees to wave her own claim for an annuity of £200. per annum, and so removes the only bar to their legal union.

Lavish, a captain by the bye, is a character written for Lewis, and frequently found in life, who, unable to resist a present temptation to expence, indulges the whim, if he is to save it a

thousand ways; these disproportioned outlays to be compensated by petty self-denials, are among the delusions of fancy, and heralds of disaster. It was as moral in its tendency, as entertaining in its progress.

The comedy was finely acted, and stood its ground, in defiance of the German genius, that *mental* COMET, as Taylor well called it in his Prologue, which had darted upon us from a distant sphere. He was fortunate also in an epilogue by Colman, spoken by Fawcett, as a manager of a country theatre, sold off to various buyers.

> "A sturdy farmer bought the *walls* — why then,
> What was a barn, will be a *barn* again.
> Corn on the stage, not mummers will be seen;
> And oats be *thresh'd* where ACTORS should have been."

Knight, the actor, a man of talent, by the opera of the Turnpike Gate, increased his value greatly with the manager. His own *Maythorn* was beautiful acting—and Munden valued himself always highly upon the performance of *Crack*, in the Turnpike Gate.

At Drury Lane, Linley, under the title of the *Pavilion*, tried an Arabian Night's entertainment, but it did not suit the climate.

We had been indebted to Kotzebue, in the summer, for *Family Distress*. The *Wise Man of the East* changes the sex of the victim. The *infamy* which constitutes the fable of this play is a

nonpareil in depravity — a heartless invention of the German muse, and a libel upon our nature.

Ellen Metland, from the distresses of her parents, becomes dependent upon Lady Diamond. Her ladyship has planned the ruin of young Clarenceforth, and Ellen flies to save him, by possessing him of the plan and some of the means. In making this discovery she in course loses her patroness, and therefore begs him to procure a coach for her, and send her to her friends. The *gratitude* of this monster leads him to lodge her in a brothel, for the purposes of seduction. Ellen effects her escape, passes the night under a shed, and in the morning implores the other jewel, Lady Diamond, not to acquaint her family with the step she had taken. That virtuous lady had however been already with them, and turned her virtue into pitch, to punish her honesty. Ellen throws herself into the Thames, and the Humane Society restore her, as in the summer they did Mr. Maxwell, by their agent, the wise man of the East, Ava Thoanoa, who turns out to be the father of Young *Hopeful:* the son repents his errors, (ERRORS!) and instead of being hanged, is rewarded with a virtuous woman.

And this is comedy! and these are human beings!

Covent Garden Theatre being thus provided happily, on the 30th of November, with an entertainment as moral as its *piazzas*, Mr. Lewis, on

the 7th of December, supplied the rival house, in the regular way, with a stock of equal value, called the *East Indian*. I say in the *regular* way; because I believe Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Powell had each of them been *benefited* by the lesson at the close of the last season.

Dorimont, a married man, of the most exalted sentiments, abuses the friendship, the confidence, the hospitality of Mortimer, and debauches his daughter. The young lady, a person of infinite merits, and the delight of a fond and virtuous father, elopes from him to live as the mistress of her seducer, and devote her parent to agonies unutterable. The guilty are victims of remorse, as they deserve to be; but time operates in their favour, which they did *not* merit; and by removing the wife seasonably, enables Mr. Dorimont to marry his mistress.

Mr. Kemble did Mr. Lewis the honour to act the father, Mortimer, in this play. The scene in which he is by accident led to the abode of his daughter — the scene of *her* contrition and *his* forgiveness, he acted in a manner so exquisitely tender, he touched the parental character with such powerful truth, as to bear the play triumphant through the moral assault which it had provoked. Miss Biggs, in Zorayda, showed herself worthy to act with him.

Mr. Cumberland had now procured an unpublished romance, by the fashionable German; how-

ever he took the credit of re-writing it entirely. It was called Joanna, and Busby composed music for it. As it was a spectacle of lavish expence, and not at all a favourite, Kotzebue thought it worth his while publicly to disclaim every thing in it that was *offensive*. It was produced on the 16th of January, 1800.

Mr. Pye, as a scholar and a critic, had every claim to Mr. Kemble's aid. Accordingly he acted *Richard* for him, in a tragedy called Adelaide, the name of the heroine sustained by Mrs. Siddons. There were two powerful scenes; one in which Adelaide vindicates herself to Richard from the villanous aspersions of his brother John; another wherein Richard, to the legate of the pope, unfolds the storm of reason and policy, that would one day snatch mankind from the tyranny of imposture and unholy ambition. The play exhibited a powerful struggle with intractable materials.

The reader, who has done me the honour to attend to my brief illustrations of the MODERN DRAMAS, will have remarked with surprise, and I hope with disgust, that they were most of them built upon moral paradox. He will remember to have heard from those same venerable men, who stood in the relation to him of parent, whether of the person or the mind, that *all* VICE had a contagious influence; that any *single* enormity, long indulged, from the natural operation of our self love, begot a specious sanction that satisfied the conscience;

and by the extension of similar palliation to kindred crimes, the whole mind became irrecoverably tainted, and the BEING obnoxious and to be avoided. The *German* secret of interest tended to strengthen the self-delusion in actual life; it laid the "flattering unction to the soul," that any one vice might maintain its power in the most amiable minds; and exhibited the *adultress*, and the *seducer*, and the *robber*, and even the *murderer*, as the most generous of the species. The sort of thing became popular, from the *passion* it set in motion, as well as the balm it infused into the festering wounds of memory. The *most* guarded had some imperfections, which they would fain hope to be venial; they were now systematically taught, that even GOODNESS might consist with errors far more criminal than their own. Thus sympathy usurped the place of censure, and a door was opened to that fatal fallacy, of making a *compromise* with morals, and setting the vices to which we were *not* inclined, as a sort of balance to those in which we were determined to indulge.

I have already expressed my opinion of the talent of Morton. He saw the strong leaning of the public taste, and in *Speed the Plough*, without the sacrifice of any principle, constructed an interest of deep pathos, and sufficiently romantic. Sir P. Blandford, on the eve of marriage, finds his mistress in the embraces of his own brother. He stabs him upon the spot. The intended bride subsequently

bears a son, the fruit of that disastrous connexion. By a more propitious union Sir Philip has a daughter, whom accident leads into an attachment to her unknown cousin. The brother, recovered from the effect of his wound, secretly watches over the excesses of Sir Philip — at length discloses himself to that victim of remorse, and their children are permitted to unite their hands.

Morton was fond of agricultural improvements, and had a taste for ingenious machinery. The *abuse* of such pursuits suggested to him the *Handy* family, and they became in his hands a source of fine comic satire. His love of the country brought him acquainted with farmer Ashfield and *his* family. Of these materials he composed a comedy, of which the town was extremely fond — a play admirably acted in all its parts; and so powerful as to support every company of comedians who have performed it. The first night of *Speed the Plough* was the 8th of February 1800.

Miss Joanna Baillie, a rather metaphysical dramatist, had published a series of plays upon the passions. If she executed her design, each play was to be in fact the *history* of some one passion; its rise, its progress, its gratification, which in tragedy, of course, was its extinction in the death of the person whose bosom it had usurped.

A very admirable critic showed at the time with great felicity, the delusion as to the *moral effect* of such a play, and the absurd *narrowness* of its plan,

as precluding from so many sources of pleasure, and auxiliaries of the greatest importance.

Mr. Kemble, however, had been struck with *De Montfort*, which I then read by his desire, and he told me of his intention to make some alterations to bring it better within the scope of stage representation, and to act the character himself, consigning his nobler sister to the care of Mrs. Siddons.

In pursuance of the modern creed, which I am at all times ready to combat, De Montfort is a most excellent being, cherishing through life an unappeasable hatred against *Rezenvelt*; whose pleasantry had, in their boyhood, annoyed him, and whose free castigation inflicted, in his progress through life, many a wound upon a mind suffering constantly from apprehension. His hatred at one time produces a duel. Rezenvelt is there also his master. Lady Jane, the sister of De Montfort, becomes an object of admiration to Rezenvelt, and this embroils her admirer again with her brother: however, she commands with much dignity a reconciliation between them, and "speaks of peace, where there is no peace." De Montfort hearing that Rezenvelt is to pass through a neighbouring forest, after one of the usual combats between honour and hatred, lies in wait for him in the track, and barbarously murders him. The groans of the dying man alarm a neighbouring convent; the assassin is secured, to die of remorse in all the hells of guilt.

This is all of the story that need be told. I pre-

sume the greater part of mankind feel an involuntary scepticism as to the character itself. I remember it was corroborated by the story of a bedridden victim to the gout, who, having afforded hospitality to a schoolfellow whom he had hated, crawled out of his bed-room in the night time, and finding his guest asleep, cut his throat and then retreated to his own chamber, with horrible satisfaction. The cause assigned was a generous suggestion of his school-fellow, for which he ought to have adored him, "that they should take at school a punish-"ment upon themselves, which two poorer boys "had actually merited."

But it must be sufficiently obvious that these instances, to use the language of the catalogue, are of "*rare occurrence.*" The lesson is therefore too limited in its application for general purposes; and the passion too disgusting to be endured in all its *singleness*, and without any of the palliations, which render other passions objects of respect or pity even in their excesses. But though I must venture these objections to the plan and conduct of De Montfort, I yet feel the highest respect for the mind capable of such exemplifications of human nature in its debasement; and admire the nervous diction in which the author displays her very *original* conceptions.

The acting of Mr. Kemble was amazingly powerful; and he showed how well he could conceive and display the features of a passion, from which he was

personally more free than most men of his time. He was, as I well know, (for some of the records remain under his own hand,) a most unsparing censor of his own failings; an indulgent and benevolent extenuator of those in other men. At all the vulgar persecution which barked about him in his career, he seldom deigned to be angry; and never, as he might have done, silenced it by authority which he could have employed, or attentions which were unmerited.

Every care was taken in the decoration of De Montfort. Capon painted a very unusual pile of scenery, representing a church of the 14th century with its nave, choir and side aisles, magnificently decorated; consisting of seven planes in succession. In width this extraordinary elevation was about 56 feet, 52 in depth, and 37 feet in height. It was positively a building.

The play, however, was found to be heavy, and on the whole unpleasing, and could only be kept alive eleven nights. Yet Mrs. Siddons exerted herself powerfully in the Countess Jané; and the Hon. F. North wrote a prologue to recommend it, and the Duchess of Devonshire an epilogue to enforce the doctrines of its ingenious author.

Comedy, at both theatres, trod in its accustomed steps. *Seduction* supplied Prince Hoare a field for the display of the golden medium, which it seems puts all these domestic concerns in the happiest train imaginable —

First, — Parents, do not be *too* rigorous on the subject of your children's affections.

Secondly, — Children, never think of running from the paternal roof with the *first villain* that asks you.

Here was a family oddly enough named Burleigh; and the old gentleman of the name, in the course of the piece, assumes the disguise of an old woman. He discovers, in his disguise, that his daughter is innocent, though she had been a fugitive, and is reconciled to her, and to her union with Clermont. The reader sees that the desire to have Bannister burst like a fury out of his old woman's garb, and offer to fight the whole company, takes everything like dignity from the serious interest; and the comic incident, of Maxim seeking a wife through the newspapers, though highly diverting, forms no contrast; for nothing in the ludicrous can exceed the *Pere de famille* Burleigh himself. But King and Bannister, with Jordan, Pope and Biggs, could not fail to be entertaining; and though this author's comedies were never equal to his farces, yet a mind fertile in whimsical inventions could not but afford abundance of amusement in five acts.

Dibdin's *Liberal Opinions* was also an amusing production, nearly allied to farce. The progress of refinement produces the gradual encroachment of the ranks of life upon each other. The necessaries of existence, easily obtained, are exchanged

for the luxuries. An idle competition for the unessential involves society in debt. The stage echoes the complaints of the real world, and our comedies now teemed with all the frauds by which the needy would become wealthy, and everlasting DEBT bolted upon you in the train of the comic muse. In the present play, *debt* is the great hinge of the interest. Bailiffs are flying about in all directions, and ten thousand pounds are ript from the lining of an old drab coat. The Liberals are all happily disposed of in marriage; and a thing of infinitely more difficulty, the Jew *resigns* the ten thousand pounds found in the lining of the drab coat. The name of this unhappy person is Ephraim; but, I suppose, prayers were immediately put up in the Synagogue for his recovery from so unaccountable a lunacy.

The levity of the preceding paragraph was the natural result of a mind at ease, inclining to the various course of the narrative, and exhibiting from day to day the transactions, whether serious or comic, of the theatres of London. But I am now to speak of an event so horrible in its nature, so surprising in all its circumstances, so perfectly without a motive, and yet so transcendent in its mischief, that I need these few lines of preparation to assume the proper tone for a detail so unparalleled. On the 15th day of May 1800, the late amiable sovereign, George the III., upon his entrance into the royal box at Drury Lane Theatre,

was fired at, by a frantic miscreant in the pit, with a pistol loaded with two slugs. And on the same day, His Majesty, in the morning, attending the field exercises of the grenadier battalion of the guards in Hyde Park, a gentleman named Ongley, standing in the direction, and not twenty yards from the royal person, was shot by a ball fired from the musquet of some soldier in the ranks unknown. I put the two events together, because, in all probability, they were instantly associated in the royal mind; and His Majesty must have conceived, that some assassins that day were taking *every* means to destroy him. The King, upon hearing the report of the pistol, stood *firm*, at about four paces in advance from the door of the box; but amid the alarm and horror, and the thousand voices that called to *seize the assassin*, with the self-possession that became a sovereign, perhaps expecting to have a second shot fired in the tumult from some other quarter, His Majesty calmly advanced to the *very front of the box*, where he remained, as such a man only could be, perfectly undismayed. Upon seeing the Queen enter, he at first with his hand waved her back, but upon her enquiring what was the matter, the King considerately replied, "Only a *squib!* they have been *firing squibs.*" After the assassin, across the orchestra, had been taken out of the pit, the Queen, in great agitation, came forward and curtsied, and asked His Majesty, "whether "they should stay?" His answer was, "We will

NOT STIR; we will *stay* the WHOLE of the ENTERTAINMENTS."

The Princesses in their alarm fainted, except the Princess Elizabeth, whose more powerful nerves enabled her to assist in their recovery. The *heroism* of their Sovereign, and his escape, exalted the joy of the people to rapture, and it was with no common feelings, that the national anthem was delivered;—GOD had indeed that day *saved the King*.

James Hadfield, the assassin, was about 29 years of age, had served on the Continent under H. R. H. the Duke of York, who remembered him in the 15th Dragoons, and one of his orderlies. On the 26th of the following month, this man's trial for high treason took place, before Lord Kenyon; it was what is termed a trial at bar in the Court of King's Bench. Mr. Erskine was assigned to him for counsel; and whether with respect to his stating the law upon the case, or his elucidations of mental aberration, his speech was among the most interesting efforts of his powerful talent. When he called his witnesses, such a stream of facts, that could not have been coloured for the purpose, flowed in full conviction of the prisoner's *insanity*, that, by Lord Kenyon's direction, and Mr. Attorney General's entire concurrence, the Jury, without retiring, recorded a verdict of *Not guilty*. He was in course taken proper care of for his life.

The dreadful wounds which he had received in the service had injured the brain, and produced, at various times, very alarming results. When not in the paroxysm of his disorder, the man was gentle, kind, and industrious: but he had tried to bayonet the preserver of his life in 1796, and attempted to murder his infant child but two days before his attack upon the person of the King. Yet of his child he was dotingly fond, and he never mentioned His Majesty without blessings, because it was from his bounty he derived his *pension.*

I wish to make but one reflection upon this business, and I could have desired it to come with all the authority of the seat of Justice. It is this: that when the relatives of persons acting in the manner of Hadfield, pass over the ravings or the violences of their lunacy, satisfied with an interval of calmness, a glimpse of returning reason, and allow such unhappy beings to be the actual masters of their conduct, they incur a fearful responsibility indeed before God and man. It is not a matter for *their* speculation or indulgence — they are bound to ask the judgment and the aid of a branch of the profession of the highest importance in society, and whose studies lie in that region of our structure, which, all of it "fearfully and wonderfully made," is there more peculiarly *wonderful* and to be *feared.*

It is hardly of consequence to enquire the motive that frenzy assigns for an act so atrocious; but Hadfield was possessed with an opinion, that it was proper he himself should die. Suicide, as he conceived, would rob him of decent burial; he therefore, without intending the death of the King, fired into his box, knowing that the deliberate attempt *alone* was sufficient to bring about that death, which he persuaded himself was necessary to society. Before the exact state of the man could be known, (for the *Attorney General* did not know it, even upon the trial,) the King, as I heard, entertained some notions of systematic violence; because he said, "If with my family I cannot "enjoy my amusements in the midst of my people, "let them take my *life*, for existence is not worth "holding upon such conditions."

Sheridan and Richardson were both dreadfully annoyed by this miserable business. The royal favour had for a long time rather inclined to the rival theatre. Mr. Sheridan, upon some late occasions, showed, that he knew how to drop the language of PARTY upon any grand and *vital* question. The King had applauded his ENGLISH feeling on the subject of invasion; and now they apprehended such an outrage would beget a distaste to the place where it was perpetrated, and Drury Lane once more become a stranger to the royal presence. But the *condition* of the maniac

dispelled every doubt; and, however untrue the position, (for FACTION seldom rages without the *murderer* in her train,) it was best to have it thought, that the blameless life of the Sovereign secured him, as reasonably it ought to have done, from even the *possibility* of a personal enemy. It is well for government to hold such language, but it would be criminal indeed to act upon the presumption that it was true. Forty years' experience have at least settled my own conviction upon this subject.

The reader would be little likely to excuse me, if I omitted to notice during the theatrical season, the death of a gentleman to whom all English stages are under eternal obligation. George Steevens, the editor of Shakspeare, died on the 22d January 1800, at his house on Hampstead Heath, in the 64th year of his age. Of his knowledge as an antiquarian, a critic, and a scholar, he has left his brief but expressive compositions, to speak for him, on pages from which they *cannot* be removed. In my first volume I have spoken, with the feeling which it excited, of a very unnecessary publication by Mr. Hayley, rendered even malicious, when it is considered, that in a place where there should enter nothing but the spirit of TRUTH, he had himself exhibited the following verses as the character of Mr. Steevens. I make not the least apology for their insertion in this place; they *do* proudly keep one over his grave, and are

inimitable for nicety of discrimination, and, as I think, perfect resemblance.

" Peace to these ashes! once the bright attire
Of Steevens, sparkling with ethereal fire!
Whose talents, varying as the diamond's ray,
Could fascinate alike the grave or gay.

" How oft has pleasure in the social hour
Smil'd at his wit's exhilarating power!
And truth attested, with delight intense,
The serious charms of his colloquial sense!
His genius, that to wild luxuriance swell'd,
His large, yet latent, charity excell'd:
Want with such true beneficence he chear'd,
All that his bounty gave his zeal endear'd.

" Learning, as vast as mental power could seize,
In sport displaying, and with graceful ease,
Lightly the stage of chequer'd life he trod,
Careless of chance, confiding in his God!

" This tomb may perish, but not so his name
Who shed new lustre upon Shakspeare's fame!"

A few venial errors " set off his head," I affirm the above to be a just record of George Steevens. Yet this gentleman has been assailed with a perfect wantonness of abuse, and his censurers have forgotten the sanctuary afforded by the grave, to errors infinitely greater than his. The elements were in truth very strangely mingled in him. You heard frequently of sportive mischief, that provoked your anger and your laughter; you also heard of munificence, of tenderness and charity,

that made the bosom swell, and filled the eyes with tears.

For several successive years, I used to converse with Mr. Steevens, frequently three times during the week, and enjoyed, with very dear friends, his wisdom and his wit. He appeared to me to have made his morning walk from Hampstead, an equal exercise to his fancy and his frame; and many of the pleasantries with which he daily amused the town, were, no doubt, among the reveries of this "*solitary walker.*"

It was assuredly no slight misfortune to come under the lash of George Steevens; for he had so sure a tact in seizing upon the ludicrous points of a vain, a weak, or a false character, and his exhibitions were so neat and peculiar, and given in terms so provokingly apt and so sure to be remembered, that a dozen words might have the effect of rendering their object, at least for *years*, ridiculous. He had not perhaps taken the most favourable view of our mixed and imperfect nature, and commonly received with *suspicion* the attentions which were paid to him from sincere regard. So absolutely had this feeling worked itself into a habit, that when, in the dangerous illness before his last, I walked out to Hampstead to see him, he asked with earnestness, "whether I had really taken the trouble for that *sole* object." And upon my assuring him that such was positively the fact, the peculiar *glance of distrust* vanished from his countenance,

and he became, though then far from well, as animated, as cordial, and even *more* communicative, than I had ever known him to be.

I remember that, while we were enjoying the fine air from the heath together, he gave me a very interesting topography of his neighbourhood. The house he lived in had been one of public entertainment, known by the title, perhaps sign, of the *Upper Flask;* to which Addison and Steele, a century back, had resorted, and where, if the subjects of the *Tatlers* and *Spectators* were not conceived, the minds were certainly invigorated, which produced that unparalleled series of periodical essays.

A doubt was once started, however remarkable, whether Mr. Steevens, though he had chosen Shakspeare as the basis of his literary fame, had a sound and *hearted* preference for his genius. His opinion as to the character of *Hamlet*, that as to his *Sonnets*, replete as they are with the *very* language of his plays, and a variety of *notes* not very respectfully couched, will be adduced by those who advocate such a suspicion. The taste of Mr. Steevens may be reasonably deduced from his composition; and *that* is invariably marked by sarcasm and point. His genius led him to satire and to epigram. I am not likely to forget the peculiar animation with which he this day expatiated as to the powers of Dryden. "Were I," said he, "a young man, I would "begin the study of English versification in the "rhymed plays of Dryden." As I suppose I ex-

pressed some surprise at this singular declaration, he asked, "Where in the whole compass of our "literature I could find any thing superior to the "following passage in the second part of the Con- "quest of Grenada?" He then, from memory, recited in his silver voice, and giving the full harmony of every line, the satirical exclamation of Lyndaraxa, in the second scene of the third act.

"O, how unequally in me were join'd
A creeping fortune, with a soaring mind!
O lottery of fate! where still the wise
Draw blanks of fortune, and the fools the prize!
These cross, ill-shuffl'd lots from Heav'n are sent;
Yet dull Religion teaches us content.
But when we ask it where that blessing dwells,
It points to pedant colleges and cells;
There, shows it rude, and in a homely dress,
And that *proud* WANT mistakes for happiness."

Mr. Kemble, upon my quoting it to him, said it was a noble specimen of the peculiar force of Dryden. But as I am not going, at least on this occasion, to give a full detail of my observation of Mr. Steevens, I here take leave of a character too various to be easily drawn, too important to be slightly handled; at once a lesson and a problem.

I may, however, indulge a wish, that he should retain the proud distinction of being, perhaps, the *best* editor of Shakspeare; and that, differing *toto cœlo* as they did on many points, Mr. Steevens should not entirely merge into Mr. Malone; and, if the practice continue, at last sink, in the accu-

mulating stream of illustration by which the margin of Shakspeare is in danger to be overflowed. I could really desire to be permitted to replace him in the modest limits of his own FIFTEEN volumes; with a few improvements as to disposition merely; and the very slender accession indeed of *certain* amendments of the text, and explanations which, on the whole, appear to be more felicitous even than his own.

The Haymarket Theatre was now, in its turn, to be given up to the foul fiend. Accordingly, on the 2d of July, the pantomimical drama of Obi, or Three-fingered Jack, the maimed hero, *Proh pudor!* by that elegant actor, Charles Kemble, was performed before a most crowded, brilliant, and *judicious* audience. The additions thus made to the vulgar tongue were of great value. We became acquainted with the Obi woman, with Tuckey, and Jenkannoo, Quashee and Quashee's wife; and the region of Foote and the Colmans was shifted into that of Sadler's Wells, or Astley's, or the Circus.

But on the 16th Charles Kemble redeemed the credit of the theatre, by his very clever play called the *Point of Honour*, which was in the first place extremely interesting, and in the second, exceedingly well acted, by *himself* as well as others. It was a maiden production.

The manager of this theatre now assumed, I have no sort of doubt with the royal sanction, the names of Arthur Griffenhoofe, Jun. which, if my friend,

Sir George Naylor, can examine for laughter, he may probably find duly enregistered in the College of Arms; — if he do not prefer seeing and enjoying the *Review*, or the Wags of Windsor; for which he need not wait long, while Caleb Fawcett, I beg his pardon, Quotem, is in existence. For John Lump, it is with sincere regret that I announce, from alarming symptoms of late, my despair of the *perfect recovery* of that Yorkshire Bumpkin.

CHAP. XIV.

SEASON OF 1800–1801. — KEMBLE DESIROUS TO PURCHASE, RE-ASSUMES THE MANAGEMENT. — MRS. MONTAGU. — KEMBLE'S REMARK. — THAT LADY'S WISDOM. — DR. MONCEY. — MARBLES. — CONDESCENSION. — CATO IN LYBIA. — THE SOLDIERS. — BLANCHARD. — MRS. S. KEMBLE. — VIRGINIA. — GEORGE COOKE AT COVENT GARDEN — CHARACTERISED — HIS RICHARD CRITICISED — COMPARED WITH KEMBLE. — LIFE, BY REYNOLDS. — ANTONIO FAILS. — COOKE'S KITELY. — MR. KEMBLE'S LEAR. — LETTERS. — KING JOHN. — POOR GENTLEMAN. — CYMBELINE. — DEAF AND DUMB. — LA PEROUSE — COOKE'S SIR GILES. — ADELMORN. — COOKE'S CONDUCT.

THE winter season of 1800–1801 commenced about the usual time; Drury Lane Theatre once more under the management of Mr. Kemble. He returned to this unthankful office with some idea of still closer connexion with that house. Sheridan had thrown out hints that upon a proper consideration, he should be willing to dispose of a part of the property, and Mr. Kemble conceived that if he were himself in possession of a FOURTH of the concern, and by the steady assertion of a right

could restrain Mr. Sheridan from his intromissions, or, perhaps, buy him out altogether, the theatre might flourish once more under him, as it had done under Mr. Garrick, and his career close, as he wished it to do, by his being patentee of Drury Lane play-house.

Should the reader feel astonishment at the *improvidence* of his entering into such a scene of pitiful disgraces and endless embarrassments, I then tell him from Mr. Kemble's own mouth, "that "the theatre, *fairly treated*, was a profitable con- "cern;—this was a fact," he said, "about which he "could not be mistaken, as all the accounts during "his former management had in course been in- "spected by him, and were accurately known to "him." But he was sensible of the necessity of a very entire reform; and as he was always an object of real or feigned dread to the whole generation of fattening reptiles about such a concern, so his return to the management was attended by the usual obsequiousness and the usual hypocrisy. But it was not new to him. Horace touches the state of things, within and without the walls of Drury, to the syllable.

> "Seditione, dolis, scelere, atque libidine, et ira,
> Iliacos intra muros peccatur, et extra."
>
> *Epist. ad Lollium*, v. 15.

Mr. Kemble, as well from prudence as taste, opened with Hamlet. The beginning of a season

is rather thinly attended, but Shakspeare's attraction is always superior to any other; besides, it was cause and consequence closely united — in the management of your greatest *actor* you will enjoy your greatest *poet*.

Shakspeare had just lost his illustrious pupil, his most eloquent defender, Mrs. Montagu, at an advanced age. She died on the 25th of August 1800. The preparation of her mind was excellent; the great author of the *Life of Cicero** assisted in her education. Of her book upon Shakspeare, without expecting the praises of commentators, it may be fame enough to ask, where there is such *another?* Her house was the resort of the learned and the tasteful, and her charities were more ornamental to Portman Square than her abode, elegant as it was, and still remains. As Mr. Kemble passed the front of it with me, he pointed to the newly placed hatchment, and exclaimed in a subdued tone,—

"There's a GREAT SPIRIT gone!"

But the reader shall not take this upon even *his* word, and yet it was one that never *paltered* with the TRUTH. I will place before him a part of her counsel to a learned, but eccentric physician of sixty-five, who talked to her of retirement from active life. Remark the dignity of tone—the *male* power of expression.

"I much approve of the style and temper of

* Dr. Conyers Middleton.

" your last letter, as far as it inclines to that *decent*
" share of retirement and meditation, which be-
" comes the age of sixty-five. But, as in a gay and
" dissipated life, the faults and levities of YOUTH
" would continue longest upon you, have a care
" those of AGE do not advance faster in your retreat.
" It is the great misfortune of man never to be
" without enemies. The passions in his own breast
" are the most dangerous he has. No bolt or bar
" can exclude them. In the silence of the night
" they are heard; they invade every solitude, how-
" ever deep. When the gay illusions of the world
" spread no longer their temptations to our fancy,
" there may arise spirits of great power and in-
" fluence to haunt our dark retreats. Pride, dis-
" content, suspicion, selfishness, and the whole train
" of unsocial passions, like the spectres of the
" night, stalk about us.

" We had better entertain *idle affections* than
" MALIGNANT PASSIONS. If you retire, from an
" opinion, that mankind are insincere, ungrateful,
" and malignant, you will grow PROUD, by reflect-
" ing, that YOU are not *like* these Pharisees. We
" should retire, from a sense of our own faults,
" with a desire to correct them, and have leisure
" for self-examination. This is the spirit of Christian
" philosophy. By frequently considering our own
" errors, we lose the bitterness we should perhaps
" express when we perceive the vices of others.
" If you find you grow *more indulgent* to your fel-

" low-creatures in your retirement, be assured you " have spent your time VERY PROFITABLY. I should " have a higher opinion of the uses of retirement, " if I saw it produce the fruits — of BENEVOLENCE, " of HUMILITY, of CHARITY.

* * * *

" In your retired hours, think much of your *own* " state in respect to God and the world; as little " as you can of the conduct of others towards YOU. " Do not harden your heart against mankind by " too intense meditation on their vices and follies. " Consider them as you do your patients; ad- " minister to their infirmities: give to *some* advice, " and to ALL a good example."

The letter from which the above is extracted, was written in the year 1762, to Dr. Moncey, of Chelsea. Her portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, was not long since exhibited in Pall Mall. I regarded it with veneration, for it was absolute identity. An exquisite profile of her, when young, shows that she was then as beautiful as she was wise.

From Portman Square, Mr. Kemble and I continued our walk, till we came to Park Lane, where he saw some chimney-sweeps playing at marbles. " Poor fellows," said he, " they have lost their patroness!" then going up to them — " Do you know, Boaden, that I think TAW the best thing I *play?*" I laughed, I believe, at the fancy; but he suddenly called out, as he had done when a boy,

"*Fain dribbling*," and taking up a marble that lay at the greatest distance from the ring, he knuckled down, and in the real and true style struck out of it the marble he aimed at. He rose in the greatest glee to find he had lost no skill in this early accomplishment, and, dropping a *shilling* into the ring, in the *name* of Mrs. Montagu, passed on.

They who love the *light* parts of a SOLID CHARACTER, will not disdain this whim of my great friend. They who are obliged to keep a *rigid stateliness* in their OWN movements, will think this condescension of Cato ought to have been spared.

This peculiarity of doing a whimsical thing with the most Cervantic gravity, displayed itself on another occasion in the lobby of the theatre, while he was manager. I had been dining with him and Mrs. Kemble, and in the evening we walked down to the house, as was his custom, to give his ultimate instructions for the night. As we entered the hall of the theatre, about a dozen soldiers were standing on each side of the fire-place, who had, perhaps, carried him off the stage, as Alexander, upon their shields. Upon seeing their leader, they all took off their hats to him, and stood *firmly*, as a soldier is taught to do. Kemble turned himself suddenly round to me, and said, "If you have a guinea about you, give it to me." He but seldom, I think, took much money out with him, and NEVER carried it *long*. I gave him what he wanted, and

then, with a *wink*, that led me to observe him, he gravely advanced to the soldiers, and thus addressed them.

"Soldiers! when Cato led his army across the "burning deserts of Lybia, he found himself "parched up with drowth; in plainer words, he "was *very dry*. One of the soldiers stepped out "on this, unperceived, and brought him presently "some water in his steel cap. What do you think "Cato said to the soldier? I'll tell you. 'Com-"rade,' said he, 'drink *first* YOURSELF.' Now, I "dare say, Cato never in his life led braver men "than I at present see before me; therefore, to "follow so great an example, do YOU drink *that* for "ME." And he put the guinea into the hands of a non-commissioned officer. The manly troop sent after him a "God bless your honour!" and we went on to his dressing-room. "Boaden," said he, "I "doubt I am not quite right in my story, but the "BEER will help our friends to *swallow* it." He repaid me the loan very pleasantly, for he added to it, I remember, ONE HUNDRED pounds, that, some how or other, he had gotten for me from the treasurer. To resume the regular course of my narrative.

On the 27th of September, Mrs. Siddons opened *her* season, with the character of Isabella, and Mr. Kemble acted Biron in his usual interesting manner. A long tried and very useful servant of the public, Mr. Blanchard, on the 1st of October,

made his *debût* in town, at Covent Garden, in *Acres*, in Sheridan's Rivals, and *Crack*, in Knight's Turnpike Gate. He was then, and is still, fitter for the latter style of character than the former. I was going to say with Hamlet, that "millions of Acres" would hardly weigh against the FEE SIMPLE of Dodd, in the land of Folly.

Mrs. Stephen Kemble being in town, on a visit to Mrs Siddons, Mr. Kemble asked her for a single night, to act *Ophelia* to his Hamlet. She followed it by a *Cowslip* of artless nature, and in both characters showed the town what they lost, by her unavoidable residence in the north.

Mrs. Plowden, a fashionable lady, the wife, I believe, of the author of Jura Anglorum, had fancied herself strong enough for dramatic composition, and an opera by her, called *Virginia*, was acted at Drury Lane on the 30th of October; it was not bearable in any one scene, and could not be given out by all the efforts of John Bannister. Mr. Kemble came forward, and very emphatically impressed his *management* upon the public ear; for thus he addressed the audience. "The respect, "ladies and gentlemen, that I have always shown "to your opinion, whenever I have had the honour "of conducting the public amusements of this "theatre, leads me to regret that it should be "adverse to this piece. I must naturally feel "interested in the success of every dramatic work "that is presented at this theatre; but at the same

"time I most sensibly feel the deference which is "due to your decision." He then withdrew the fair author and her opera, and announced that everlasting stop-gap at Drury, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife.*

The 31st of October was an era in stage history. Mr. Harris, in the person of the celebrated George Cooke, obtained an actor, who in some characters of tragedy was thought by the crowd even superior to Kemble. But it was not only by the million that he was so esteemed; there were men of considerable intelligence who joined in this decision. Mr. Cooke made his first appearance in the character of Richard III. In his expression he was sarcastic; in his figure, manly; in his gait and the motion of his arms awkward, but impressive. The singularity of his utterance was, that he spoke with two voices, one of which was harsh and acrimonious, the other mild and caressing. The great secret of his *effect* in speaking, was a rapid transition from one of these sounds to the other: He used the first either to control or convince — the second to soothe or betray.

When I first saw Cooke, his fin-like arms moving like a tortoise, and heard for half an hour his *rage* and his *cunning*, I confess I thought he might be given up to the pencil of *Stephano* in the Tempest.

Ste. "Four legs and two voices; a most delicate monster! "his forward voice now is to speak well of his friend; his "backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract."

But I learned to moderate this censure, and even to look upon him, as far as effect was concerned, to be a "tower of strength." It is true, he was only the *robust* half of Digges, at best, for he had not the slightest *pathos;* and so convinced were his audiences of this want, that I do think a white handkerchief in the hand of Cooke would have thrown them into a fit of immoderate laughter.

Cooke was by nature a strong man, and, as far as bad habits permitted, had great strength of mind: his acting evinced both; he never tired under the extremest vociferation; he never yielded his own judgment, or seemed at all to value the opinions of others. His temper was critical and sarcastic, and it led him to subtle distinctions, that looked like thought, but were frequently any thing but reasonable. When, in the 7th scene of the 5th act, the heroic mind of Richard is hurrying on to the grand point, the *charging* of the ENEMY, the following passage occurs, in which two of his *admired* varieties were to be found.

[CATESBY hastily enters, having been dispatched by Richard to lord Stanley.]

K. Rich. What says Lord Stanley? will he bring his power?
Cate. He does refuse, my lord; he will not stir.
K. Rich. Off with his son George's head. [*Distant march.*]
Norf. My lord, the foe's already past the marsh:
After the battle let young Stanley die.
K. Rich. Why, after be it then.—
A thousand hearts are swelling in my bosom:
Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head:
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood.

At this juncture, his decision as to young George Stanley is a thing of the instant; either his *life* or *death* are of little moment; they are as grains of sand whirled from a chariot-wheel in rapid rotation. Mr. Cooke fastened upon this precise point of time to affect *deliberation*, and stood, as his admirer acknowledges, swaying his body backwards and forwards, till he settled the fate of young George, and relieved the almost agonized spectators, by "*after be it then.*" The very next line, the reader sees, makes it impossible that Richard could have been deliberating about a thing so trifling: —

"A THOUSAND *hearts* are SWELLING in my bosom!'

If Cooke did say "*my* bosom," (I think he did,) he was wrong again. Richard does not mean to indulge his *vanity*, by an insult to OTHER natures: he hoped, perhaps believed, his followers to be as brave as himself. He merely expresses the expanding energy and thick palpitation of the heart, by words that mean, "I feel as if I had a *thousand* "hearts within me." But the best *fooling*, after all, was the attempt to dismount the archers from the horses, which, without his *new emphasis*, he conceived it must be inferred they bestrid.

"Spur *your* proud horses hard,"

addressed to the cavalry; having already ordered the foot soldiery, the English bowmen. As if the

two directions were not already as separate as sense could make them —

> *Draw*, ARCHERS, draw your arrows to the *head!*
> *Spur* your proud horses *hard*, and ride in blood!

and a turn of the head sufficing to show, that they were applied to different divisions of his force!

The best of the joke is, that the new emphasis, if it did not *leave* the foot on horseback, ordered PARTICULAR men to spur at least *their* coursers hard, whatever others who had horses might do, mounted or dismounted.

> "Spur YOUR proud horses *hard*, and ride in blood."

To prove all these points we have nothing to do but to look at *original* Shakspeare. Richard's instruction there as to young Stanley, is —

> "Off instantly with his son George's head."

And upon Norfolk's suggestion that it should be *after* the battle, the intrepid tyrant disdains to waste a single word upon such a subject, and never *notices* the advice of Norfolk, nor *decides* upon it AT ALL! Shakspeare, too, *himself*, settles the whole business of the archers, and the cavalry, by making Richard address distinctly THREE distinguished parts of his army — his yeomen — his archers — his knights or lancers.

> Fight, gentlemen of England! fight, bold yeomen!
> * * * * * *

Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
* * * * * *
Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!

And thus men get the fame of *learned* acting: aye, and of being Shakspeare's *best commentators* too, who, like their great leader, QUIN himself, never on any occasion look at a single page of his genuine works.

I have just touched these points, to show that the fame at least of *some* new readings is not likely to be very old, and that every understanding is not calculated to *add* to the prescribed meanings of the stage. The real excellence of Cooke, like that of Macklin, was a certain sturdy *force* and *cunning* combined, which fitted him for the very parts in which the veteran himself excelled. Not sufficiently heroic nor dexterous for Richard, he succeeded powerfully in *Shylock*, in *Iago*, and in the *Man of the World*. In these he did not fear, and, in honest truth, had no occasion to fear, any competition in his own times. But his Sir Pertinax, on the whole, wanted the mellowness of Macklin; and the Iago and Shylock were inferior to Henderson's, the former in deep *revenge*, the latter in *passion*. He sometimes, too, in a plain blue coat, and black stockings, with a round hat in his hand, communicated so much consequence to a character, (Peregrine, for instance,) that nobody could touch him. A sizeable shelf of pamphlets, I believe, might

even yet be found, all written by utterly disinterested persons, comparing Cooke with Kemble, in Richard. The writers professed to know personally neither of those actors, and to write their very *falsehoods* purely for the love of TRUTH. The reader shall judge by a small sample. "In soliloquy " Mr Kemble's *eyes* and *attentions* were entirely " devoted to the audience; nothing could exceed " in this respect the *delicate caution* of Mr. Cooke. " The *indifference* of Kemble in the scene with " Lady Anne rendered his suit quite hopeless; the " *wheedling flattery* of Cooke was the likeliest " thing on earth to succeed." Both actors, it will be observed, necessarily spoke the same words. " When Richard has attained his object, and his " brows are circled with a 'glorious diadem,' the " reflection on the means by which he had obtained it, and its probable insecurity, rendered the " manner of Cooke *fretful*; that of Kemble was, it " seems, *uniform*." As Benedick says, " I can see " yet without spectacles," and I saw no such thing. " In Mr. Kemble's three first acts," and probably the critic thinks, the first *four*, " he had " neither intelligent action nor expression." The vinegar aspect of Mr. Cooke and the wagging of his fins shall pass for both, with all my heart, to people capable of forgetting the features of Mr. Kemble, and the graceful and yet powerful employment of every part of his figure. The author of these profound parallels "would have the great

characters of Shakspeare performed with that *simplicity* with which they are written." I have no objection, certainly, wherever that simplicity can be *found*: only I cannot say I should have chosen Mr. Cooke for the model. Old Ireland used to talk of the *sweet simplicity* of Shakspeare's *soul*; but then he might judge from the *body* of his works in his own possession. How often must these people be told, that Shakspeare, in serious composition, is a more elaborate writer than even Milton.

Theatres, like every thing else, produce their fruits of season; one of these is a comedy by Frederick Reynolds. Accordingly, on the 1st of Nov. Covent Garden exhibited one of his best, called *Life*, of which the fable was extremely interesting, and even pure, beyond this writer's usual practice. The Marchmonts were beautifully acted by Murray and his daughter. The incident it turns upon is too much, I am afraid, like life. The husband is seduced from his wife by a regular *decoy*. Marchmont is ruined, and the wife disappears, and, it is supposed, dies. She has given to her husband a daughter, of whom he is dotingly fond, and of whose education he takes the utmost care. Time operates *some* changes in NATURE; *more*, and more rapidly, in the DRAMA. Under the name of Belford the mother becomes the governess to her own daughter. Marchmont, recovered from his delusions, turns author; and his wife sends her own

story to him as a novel she is composing; this leads to recognition and reconciliation. Old Primitive, her father, who has patronised her also, without the smallest notion that she was his daughter, is at hand, with the *treasury* of the stage at his disposal. This secures a proper husband for the granddaughter, in Sir Harry Torpid, who is rather a misnomer, since he contributes to the happiness of others.

The farcical incidents of the piece (for such there must be, it seems) are found among the Lackbrains, whose cottage Primitive expects to see again, modest and humble, like its owners; but he finds the house turned out of doors — his *protégé* drunk, and his wife giving a *route*. Their destiny is therefore reversed, and better people in his own family receive the old gentleman's property.

That a daughter may have outgrown her father's knowledge is possible; but that a husband, while their daughter is still young, should not know his wife, is a strain of probability, detected by *figure*, *features*, *manner*, and the most unchangeable of all things, *voice*. But these are venial stage offences, and the play had great and deserved popularity.

Mr. Kemble, on the 13th of December, brought out a tragedy written by Mr. Godwin, called Antonio, or the Soldier's Return. The second title was too trivial almost for comedy. This play had been accepted during the recess in Mr. Kemble's management. The author is a man of genius, cal-

culated rather to furnish the materials of plays than the plays themselves. Few men have more deeply meditated the drama than Mr. Godwin. How he could conceive the fable of Antonio sufficient for a tragedy of five acts is, I confess, surprising to me.

With the royal sanction, Helena D'Almanza is married to Don Guzman. She had been previously betrothed to Rodrigo, who has been taken prisoner in battle. Her brother Antonio arriving to solicit his friend's ransom, finds that he has lost his intended bride as well as his liberty. Spanish honour leads him, by the aid of his brother Henry, to carry off their sister from a country seat of her husband. They place her in a convent with great secresy, and she is compelled to take the vows. The husband in vain tries to discover the place of his wife's concealment. At length Don Henry, repenting his share of the violence, reveals the name of the convent. She is brought to court, and, to end all contest, begs to be allowed to fulfil her vows. The king is resolute for her remaining with her husband. Antonio, to save his honour, and signalise his revenge, stabs his sister to the heart. The fable of Tancred and Sigismunda is but slight, yet is it infinitely more interesting, as well from the rank of the lover, as the struggle in the heroine between affection and duty.— She is a victim, moreover, because she renders the latter triumphant.

Dr. Johnson remarks upon a description of plays

among us, "which, by changing the catastrophe, "were tragedies to-day and comedies to-morrow." Surely if Antonio's arm had been held, or his sword mastered by Guzman, nobody would have been surprised to find this whole fable in one of Mrs. Centlivre's comedies. But when a writer has great force of sentiment and great splendor of diction, he is apt to think he can render captivating a fable of no intrinsic power.

The play failed altogether, notwithstanding Kemble was the Antonio and Mrs. Siddons the Helena. Charles Kemble was of course her *other* brother. Mr. Godwin on this occasion was really a philosopher; and I think himself all *but* enjoyed the ridiculous stage dilemma about his catastrophe. Here, again, as in the case of Colman's Iron Chest, I am apt to suspect the fear of offending the author injured the play. The part of Alonzo was heavy, and of unconscionable length. Mr. Kemble had much better have used his knife than burdened his memory. The names recurred, too, so incessantly upon the ear, that it must have been obvious no one but an author's could endure them.

Cooke at the other theatre added really to his reputation by acting the character of *Kitely*, in Ben Jonson's Every Man in his Humour. The rank in life of Kitely was not above the manners of Cooke. His hasty striding of the stage backwards and forwards, the circular position of his arms, and the see-saw of the body during his meditation, were in

Kitely appropriate, but in Macbeth vulgar and insufferable. I have already dilated upon the *academic* and *vulgar* styles in acting. At the head of each, meaning the *best* of each by infinite degrees, I place Kemble and Cooke.

Mr. Bayes, at Drury Lane this Christmas, exhibited himself in pantomime with great effect; he called it Harlequin Amulet, or the Magic of Mona. Johnston, the mechanist, made them a dragon of surprising terror, and serpents that were anything but *tempting*. The historians of Harlequin record, that in this pantomime Mr. Byrne ran up a perpendicular wall, and over the top of a house, with such amazing velocity, that it was impossible to detect the means by which he was assisted. It was a very popular performance.

Mr. Kemble's principle was, as I have often stated, to keep Shakspeare as his *own* great distinction. On the 3d of January, 1801, he revived his King Lear with every care of management, and it was productive of both fame and profit to the theatre. It is really delightful to have a mingled audience all gratified, and the wisest man among them take no exception to the source of their pleasure.

Lear was followed by King John, most splendidly decorated; but there was the usual difficulty to obtain, notwithstanding the great houses, either salary for those who brought them, or even colours and canvas in the painting-room. How other people wrote may be easily imagined, when the following reached the treasury from Mr. Kemble.

" My dear Peake,

" Let me remind you, that you are to send me FIFTY pounds for Mrs. Siddons to-day, or we shall have no *King John* on Saturday.

" If you possibly can, send me a draft for the fifty pounds (which you promised to have given me last Monday se'nnight) for the author of Deaf and Dumb.

" They are standing still in Greenwood's room, for want of a little canvas. Unless you help us there, we can have no Cymbeline, nor no pantomime at Christmas. My wish is to bring out the pantomime two or three days before Christmas.

" I am very lame, but mending. Do call on one, as you go by.

" Yours, J. P. Kemble.

" Thursday, Nov. 27th, 1800.
" No. 89, Great Russell Street,
" Bloomsbury Square."

A REMINDER.

" My dear Peake,

" We are all at a stand for want of colours. If you will help us, you shall have *Cymbeline* and full houses. Otherwise, we must go on with the West Indian, &c. Yours, J. P. Kemble.

" Monday Morning."

" One more, and that's the *last*." Othello.

" Tuesday, half-past five.

" My dear Peake,

" It is now two days since my necessity made

me send to you for SIXTY pounds. My request has been treated with a disregard, that I am at a loss how to account for.

" I certainly shall go, and act my part to-night — but, unless you send me a HUNDRED pounds before Thursday, I will not act on Thursday — and if you make me come a-begging again, it will be for TWO hundred pounds before I set my foot in the theatre.

" I am, dear Peake, yours,

" J. P. KEMBLE."

The reader has had now a peep at some of the " secrets of that prison-house," the *treasury* of a theatre; and has seen how the very manager of it was compelled to *dun* incessantly for himself and others. He may also perceive how the aids required dribbled out from the strong box, and that they never supplied more than one exigence at a time. *King John* ought to have been done on the 29th of November, 1800; I suppose Mrs. Siddons did not get her fifty pounds, for the play was not ready till the 14th of January. Cymbeline, it appears, was all but ready, as far as it rested with Mr. Kemble, the beginning of December; but it could not be brought out till the 12th of February, 1801. The *Dragon* and the *Rattle-snakes*, however, were absolutely at work on the 22d of December.

Mr. Colman this year produced a comedy at Covent Garden Theatre, called the *Poor Gentleman*. It was acted the first time on the 11th of February,

and received with great and merited applause. With respect to his ground-work, Mr. Colman's fancy had been more excursive than usual — some of his characters are from Canada, some even from Russia. The *Brambles* are here all entertaining people — the author seems to have respected the *name* that Smollet has immortalised. The Worthingtons are the worthiest people in the world; and as to Ollapod, the doctor, the sportsman, and the cavalry volunteer, it was such a compound of whimsical extravagance, that it found full employment for the vigorous humour of Fawcett. Something very like the character Colman, perhaps, saw in this period of military passion. The Lucretia Mac Tab of Mrs. Mattocks was a *class* rather than an individual, and received with shouts of laughter by the audience. Lewis had, in Frederick Bramble, that struggle in which he delighted, between dissipation and humanity, and never distinguished himself more happily.

Mr. Kemble at last delivered to the general admiration the result of what his taste and judgment had enabled him to do for Cymbeline. The anachronisms of the great poet combine the *generals* of Augustus with *modern Italians*, *human sacrifices* and *modern luxuries* in Britain. More incongruity than this play exhibits will not easily be found; but all-atoning *nature* in the characters, the sentiments and the expression, with incidents picturesque in the truest sense, and nearly endless variety, render it a favourite on the stage of our

times. Here a problem arises of difficult solution as to Shakspeare. If we did not *know* the contrary, we should be apt to conclude that, dramatically, he lived upon *anticipation*. His fancy for ever prompted him with scenery, that *his* Globe could never even affect to exhibit; and it was, probably, some strong feeling of the contrast between his *means* and ends, that led Mr. Steevens, against all authority, to conclude, that there must have been moveable, painted, perspective scenes in the theatres of Shakspeare's time.

However, the period was come when we no longer had to request the spectators to

"Piece out our IMPERFECTIONS with their *thoughts*."

The scenery of this play, with some bearing upon the confusion of the manners, was a beautiful *mêlange*. The acting of Posthumus by Kemble was then, as ever, delightful. Imogen had the full charm of the Siddons, and every body else did all that could be expected from zeal and diligence under so able a teacher. But what Mr. Kemble used to call the *prettiest* thing he ever saw upon the stage, was the *elegant rusticity* of the two boys, Guiderius and Arviragus, performed by C. Kemble and young Decamp; who really looked to be of the same family.

In the last scene of the play, Belarius presents to the King the young Princes whom he had stolen, and kept with him in his banishment. The exclamation of their father is full of nature.

> " If these be they, I know not how to wish
> A pair of worthier sons. — Guiderius had
> Upon his neck a *mole*, a *sanguine star ;*
> It was a mark of wonder."

The innocent enjoyment with which Charles Kemble presented himself, for the verification of this natural test, did not escape the tasteful eye of his brother.—" THAT now, Charles," said he, " was the " POETRY of *acting*." Thus he had fixed there, with no fading charms, *Lear*, *John*, and *Cymbeline*, and they brought a succession of very brilliant houses.

Nor was this the end of our able manager's labours for the season: he had, as his letter already given shows, procured a translation from the play of Mr. Bouilly, called *Deaf and Dumb ;* and, as was his custom, revised it with the utmost care. He determined upon acting the virtuous *Abbé de l'Epée* himself, and cast the interesting unfortunate *Theodore*, I will say, *equally* well. Miss Decamp had a power of expression in look and gesture, that was even more intelligent than language ; — it was the *lightning* of the mind, and reduced the labour of disclosure to a *point*, and the detection of villany to a *glance*.

Mr. Kemble aided this pantomime of my fair friend by a benevolence that was quite paternal ; he appeared to love his pupil as a son, and followed his indications with the decision and the zeal of the most enlightened philanthropy. The play was in all its parts most perfectly acted. The great master of the English stage needed no *foreign* lessons in his own art ; — but, when writing to his brother

from Paris, in the summer of 1802, he notices that he had seen his rival, Monvel, in the Abbé, and *admired* his performance; the *rest* of the performers he thought inferior to the English. The play *here* had the greatest possible attraction.

Mr. Fawcett, at the other house, took his turn to amuse, if not instruct, by his really clever historical pantomime of *La Perouse*, or the Desolate Island. This piece was founded upon a drama by the prolific Kotzebue. The navigator becomes another Robinson Crusoe, and his preserver is a better sort of Ourang Outang, named a Champanzee, whose sagacity is not only diverting, but often very essential. Poor Menage skipped through this semi-rational brute with untiring activity and intelligence. Farley, every way the first in this sort of exhibition, directed the whole performance. I seize the present opportunity to express my sense of his indefatigable exertions for the public amusement during a long series of theatrical seasons. He is a *master* in his art, and a most worthy man.

Michael Angelo Rooker, an artist of very great talent, died on the 3d of March this year, in Dean Street. In small figure, for book embellishment, he equalled De Loutherbourg; and some of his scenery for old Colman was quite upon a par with what that great artist had left in Garrick's theatre. When a child, I remember looking over him in the front of the house, while with a rapid pencil he freely, but adequately, sketched the procession of the Jubilee, as the characters passed.

On the 12th of March, Mrs. Jordan resumed her performances for the season with the Country Girl. It seemed to be understood at Drury, that she now entirely laid down the dagger of the serious muse. Universality is a proud hope to indulge, but in practice mischievous. If, in the train of either muse, an actress suffers by comparison, the *failure* in the one operates as an abatement of the *excellence* in the other; and persons, who would not be thought malignant, are among the foremost to exclaim — "Aye, but did you see THALIA in *tragedy* "the other night? THERE was a business!"

Mr. Cooke, at Covent Garden, on the 8th of April, added *Sir Giles Overreach* to his list of parts. He played it as he did *Richard*, and there he was strictly right in every thing he did. In the convulsive agony, however, he was only *noisy;* his face refused to supply what breath failed to utter. Still, the *exultation* and the *horror*, alike, were perfect only in Henderson.

The stage is condemned to perpetual imitation. A *ghost* is followed by a long train of *spectres*. Even *defects* of nature take their turn to interest, and the *deaf* and the *dumb* and the *blind* are selected for amusement. The success of *Deaf and Dumb* at Paris, probably conducted Morton to the *Blind Girl*. He therefore, not *entirely*, casts away a surgeon on the coast of Peru, who, by his humanity, first saves a lovely blind girl from violation, and ultimately by his skill restores her to sight. The reader will naturally expect the nuptial *couch*

to be the reward of so successful an experiment. This was an opera, with some character, equivoque, pleasantry, song, dance, procession and picturesque dresses — well acted and greatly admired. It was first performed on the 12th of April.

Mr. Kemble next produced a tragedy by Mr. Sotheby, the accomplished translator of Oberon. He struggled with the tedious horrors of Count Julian, through five acts, the detail of which I omit, because the play proved completely unsuccessful.

To *Adelmorn*, the outlaw, he was not quite so complaisant; that hero was bestowed upon Charles Kemble. Monk Lewis promised here to surpass the *effect* even of the Castle Spectre. His ghost appeared *three* times on the first performance, but *once* was afterwards found more than sufficient. The dialogue was rather mean, and was often received with laughter by the audience. It occupied a few nights of the month of May.

On the 11th of this month Mr. Cooke took the first of those *strange liberties* with the public, that afterwards became insulting and insufferable. He came on in Richard, and could not be heard; and, upon being desired to speak out, had the audacity to exhibit signs of *contempt* and *menace* to a part of the audience; and, in an abrupt manner, walked off the stage at nearly the end of the fourth act. Upon his coming on again, and showing some signs of *contrition*, he was permitted to finish the part. On the 17th and 18th of June the winter theatres closed.

CHAP. XV.

SEASON OF 1801-2. — THE GREAT RIVALS. — COOKE DISAPPOINTS THE PUBLIC. — MRS. BILLINGTON AT BOTH THEATRES. — HENRY SIDDONS. — ESCAPES. — COOKE'S AUDIT. — MRS. BILLINGTON'S ILLNESS. — REYNOLDS. — FOLLY AS IT FLIES. — BROWNE. — MRS. LICHFIELD. — KEMBLE'S ZANGA. — HIS REQUEST. — BRAHAM IN THE MANLY ROBE. — HENRY THE FIFTH. — A RIOT QUELLED BY THE MILITARY. — R. PALMER FALSTAFF. — ALFONSO. — URANIA. — THE CABINET. — THE DILETTANTI. — MR. KEMBLE ANNOUNCES THE DUKE OF BEDFORD'S DEATH. — THE WINTER'S TALE. — COOKE'S SIR PERTINAX. — STRAWBERRY HILL COMEDY. — MR. KING'S RETIREMENT. — HONOURS PAID TO HIM. — CLOSE OF THE SEASON. — MR. KEMBLE QUITS DRURY LANE. — THEATRICAL PROPERTY. — SOME CLAMOUR AGAINST HIM AND HIS FAMILY. — NOVELTIES AT COLMAN'S.

The summer theatre, during the season of 1801, lost the valuable aid of Charles Kemble, who had determined to indulge himself in a tour through Germany. Miss Decamp, too, declined the same summer engagement, and their retreat made room for Henry Johnstone and his wife. Mr. Colman this summer was so amply frequented to his stock pieces, that he needed but little novelty, and the

little he had was of no value. There was a two-act farce, called the *Gypsey Prince*, which was rendered bearable by some very pretty music by Kelly; and a thing called the *Corsair*, or the Italian Nuptials. The vigour of H. Johnstone and Farley, with a program a yard long, and new scenes by the dozen, rendered it somewhat intelligible to the spectators, and I am afraid, in the long list of annual horrors of this kind, that the Corsair must have been often *pirated*.

On the 12th of September, the Drury Lane company commenced the season of 1801-2 with the performance of *Richard the Third* and *No Song No Supper;* and it was intended that the rival tragedians should decide their *difference* in Bosworth Field, and a mighty difference, to be sure, existed between them. But on the 14th, Covent Garden Theatre was found wanting in its champion, and some most flighty extravagancies from the over-heated zeal of Murray drove him from the contest with the pit orators. Lewis then advanced, and offered the discontented their money back. Seven o'clock, however, having by this time arrived, and the majority remaining immoveable, the whole audience took *Lovers' Vows* with Selima and Azor instead of their money; and having by this acquired some taste for the drunken insolence of Cooke, they now waited for all the tribe of apologetic letters, certificates from physicians, true as to the illness, but in course concealing the cause of

it, and the prodigy's own excuse, if he could be kept in his senses to make one. In the summer his marriage with Miss Daniels, fortunately for the lady, had been annulled by Sir William Scott.

We were now advancing rapidly to that extravagance in the terms demanded by great singers, which nothing short of madness would think of complying with. The instance which I am about to offer, is one as to a lady, for whom I have expressed always the warmest admiration. Mrs. Billington had formed an engagement to sing alternately at the two theatres, from October to the April following, for which the proprietors were to secure to her (benefits included) 2000*l.* from each treasury. She sang on the 3d and 8th of October, and (in her case I may say) *acted* Mandane in Arne's noble opera Artaxerxes, with powers little short of wonderful. Mrs. Billington's figure here was, as it should be, majestic; there was that visibly about her, that rendered the interest credible. We are grown tired, or ought to be by this time, of receiving every *slip* of a girl, with neither manners nor motion above a ballad-singer, warbling, however prettily, the sublimities of Arne. We should feel the ridiculous still more strongly, if they were to endeavour to *miss* the higher parts in tragedy.

On the 8th of October, Mr. Henry Siddons, the elder son of the great actress, made his first appearance in London. He very unluckily chose for his debût the character of a German lawyer in

a very moral insipidity, called *Integrity*. It lasted only a second night, and no author was named for the failure. It might be the actor's own. The appearance of this gentleman denoted very clearly the stock he came from — but he walked the stage ungracefully, and though his features were expressive, the expression was not captivating; and the judgment, that regulated his delivery, could do little in the modulation of a hoarse and heavy quality of voice. He was ardent and sensible, feeling and correct — but the most that *prepossession* even could do, was to breathe a wish that he might not have deceived himself in his choice of a profession. On the 12th, he showed more of his powers in the great trial part of Hamlet. Defective modulation of the organ was principally to be noted, and the character was neither "the glass of fashion, nor the mould of form." Siddons never was *etherial*; he was a studious, ingenious, and careful man, greatly respected, but as an actor only respectable.

A very pleasing afterpiece, called the *Escapes*, or the Water Carrier, claims a line of notice, because it had some really charming music, selected from Cherubini, and composed by Attwood, and also that it was extremely serviceable to Covent Garden.

At that theatre, on the 19th of October, Mr. Cooke came to his audit for the disappointment which he had occasioned on the first night of the

present season. He entered before the curtain in the dress of Richard, and addressed the audience. "He acknowledged that he had no "*permission* to stay in the country so long as "he did; that it was certainly in his *power* to "have appeared at the proper time before them; "he expressed his deep regret for their disappoint- "ment, and would now do his best in their service "if they were so indulgent as to permit him."

In all these cases the present result is clear; a people, who come to be amused, will not go away without their entertainment. He who can gratify, will always be pardoned; but the ease of his absolution confirms him in his trespass; at last he grows too indecent to be borne, too insecure to be trusted; and, in an odd sort of struggle between his vice and his necessity, is sometimes docile, and at others refractory; followed, in spite of his errors, on account of genius which they seem to enlarge; till intemperance finally destroys the frame, and he is regretted, by a strange inconsistency, often beyond the steady, the umblameable servant of the public.

The disappointments suffered from the *gentler* sex in theatres are at all events of a gentle character — slight caprice, not often; real indisposition; and, in the greatest talents indeed, an affection for *home* on certain evenings of the week, commonly known by the name of *box fever*.

Poor Mrs. Billington, on the 21st of October, acted Mandane again at Drury Lane, and through

two acts had exerted herself, so that no illness was felt to fetter her powers at all, and she sang with her utmost brilliancy. At the end of the second act, she had suddenly dropped down, and a succession of most alarming fits rendered it impossible for her to go on with the character. Mr. Kemble himself explained her situation to the public, and they allowed the farce to begin, instead of any mutilated attempt at the third act of the opera.

The real cause was, that the day before, she had sent for Mr. Heaviside, the surgeon, to inspect her arm, which was much inflamed, and gave her very acute pain. Mr. Heaviside at length, on the morning of the 21st, took out an entire needle from below the right shoulder. The arm had assumed a black appearance, and her friendly surgeon dissuaded her strongly from venturing to the theatre; but she could not bear to disappoint the public, and yet struggled in vain against the dread of mortification from the blackness of the arm. Happily, no such consequence followed the accident. In a fortnight she got well.

On the 29th, Reynolds again delighted the town with a comedy called *Folly as it Flies*. The serious incidents are the consequences of dissipation; but his Lady Melmoth not being depraved, though deluded, recovers her wits at last by the aid of her virtues, and even comfort is secured by cutting off an entail in the fifth act. Fortunately that entail was not the generous Tom Tick (Lewis), nor the

legacy hunter, *Peter Post Obit* (Munden). *This* character, the *hæredipeta* of antiquity, untouched, I think, upon the modern stage, was suggested by the 197th and following paper of the Rambler. Dr. Johnson exposes the folly of sacrifices in order to obtain legacies — and shows that the tricks to conciliate favour may be always betrayed by an accomplice. Reynolds looked at the character, as he commonly did at ALL characters, on the ludicrous side. He contrives, therefore, to embarrass *his* legacy-hunter with all the debts of Tom Tick, in order to become his heir, and assigns over to him even a guardianship of Leonard's mistress. So that seriously and comically he is provided amply to his catastrophe.

Peter Post Obit, it should be stated, is not at all indebted to *Le Legataire*, of Regnard, which the author, I believe, never read to the present hour. The French nation once delighted in the wit, in the sallies of pleasantry, in the general air of enjoyment, that breathed through the writings of Regnard. His gaiety is cultivated, his eccentricity is amiable. But the spectators of such a poet must learn to be hearers, and enjoy themselves like *rational* beings. They, like ourselves, must get back again from the *eye* to the *ear*, or all that is excellent in the drama will be, like the other antiquities of the nation, the entertainment of the studious, and confined to the closet.

On the 27th of November, to the Gamester of

Mr. Browne, a very judicious actor, Mr. Cooke performed Stukely with considerable effect; not so plausible, not so genteel as John Palmer, yet the *visual* prepossession against him got over, he played it powerfully. I mean by this, that anybody might be gulled by him, who could once bring himself to endure his company; but Palmer looked qualified to ensnare and ruin the brightest spirit. Mrs. Litchfield made a very powerful impression indeed, in Mrs. Beverley, among those accustomed to the wonders of Mrs. Siddons. Is it possible to bestow praise more enviable? Murray, in Jarvis, had more *passion* than Aickin, and was, personally, quite as respectable.

Mr. Kemble, on the 4th of December, revived Dr. Young's tragedy, the Revenge. His Zanga, at any time, repaid the utmost attention of a refined audience. Dr. Young, though not a secure model for tragic writers, because he is frequently turgid, and, as in the *Night Thoughts*, (a subject still more solemn,) devoted to flowery prettiness, and Italian conceits, is nevertheless, in the character of Zanga, always *poetical*, *impassioned*, and sometimes even *sublime*. To this part, therefore, Mr. Kemble ardently devoted every congenial feeling of his mind, and it was a performance that ranked absolutely with the author's power. On this night he had a great house, and one, unfortunately, uncommonly noisy. In a word, they were *not* Athenians. In the middle of the fourth act,

he saw clearly, that if the gods thus continued to keep their "dreadful pudder" o'er his head, his fine burst, in the fifth act, where the whole concentered venom of the fiend thunders out —

"Know then, — 'Twas I,"

might be as well sung as spoken; so he suddenly stopped, in the midst of a speech, and addressed the noisy, with a sweetmeat of respect, to induce them to bear a dose of very *cool* and even *sarcastic* counsel. I insert it, though *some* succeeding managers have gone far beyond him in the *tone* of such expostulations.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"We cannot express how much we feel obliged "to you, for the honour of your attendance; but, "at this rate, the object of your visit must be "completely frustrated. We must, therefore, "entreat you to *condescend* to favour us with a "*little more* of your ATTENTION."

The turbulent were literally quelled by it; "go-"verned their roaring throats," and vehemently "applauded their monitor."

The 9th of December, 1801, claims a particular record in stage history, as introducing Braham, now an adult, to the *complete honours* of vocal excellence. He acted the generosity of Alla Bensalla, a king of Ceuta; and sang such music as

Mazzinghi and Reeve supplied for himself and Storace, in an opera written for them expressly by Prince Hoare, called Chains of the Heart, or the *Slave by Choice*. Munden bustled through the business of a grand slave-master, and Storace was his favourite. Fawcett was remembered for a *dancing-master*, and Johnstone was an *O'Phelim*, a cook to a regiment of Portuguese. The piece needed improvement, and by the author's docility, became somewhat better in its progress.

Mr. Kemble, on the 14th, at the other house, revived again his *Henry V.*, and was as greatly and justly admired in that hero as ever. Let me grace even Kemble with praise from the judicious. The late Earl of Guilford esteemed his fifth Henry the most perfect of his performances. He wrote an essay upon it, in my possession, with the utmost elegance, and quite decisive as to its various merits, if any body, critically, had ever questioned them.

On the 26th of December, one of those disgusting scenes of barbarous riot occurred at Covent Garden, originating from the monstrous practice of carrying spirits into the theatre, and generally providing, among the lower orders, for a few hours' entertainment, as if they were to garrison a town besieged. The play was Richard III. The first missile that threatened execution was a *wine glass*. On the entry of Betterton, as Tressel, to Murray, who acted King Henry VI. a *quart bottle*

grazed his hat; the actor took it up, and walked off the stage. The indignation of the audience burst out against the villain, who was, after an obstinate resistance, secured where he sat, in the front row of the two-shilling gallery, on the King's side. Some very unlucky alterations in the performances, from indisposition, kept up the Saturnalian licence of the rabble, and the trumpets, and the shouts of Bosworth Field, could not be heard. The actors became a sort of *Shrove Tuesday* sport to these brutes; and they enjoyed and prolonged the agile feats of Emery, who jumped away with singular misery, from the various *throws* at him, consisting of all the apples and oranges supplied by the fruit women. Something like this occurs in international warfare, and the merchant profitably supplies the enemy with ammunition, to be used against his country.

The farce was hurried over; the ladies would not, at last, come upon the stage; the pit took part in the tumult; the lights were extinguished, and the benches were becoming unseated, when Brandon, at the head of a few remaining soldiers, with their bayonets fixed, about *five* guardsmen, on a sudden appeared in the gallery. The glittering steel had a very calming effect upon the mischievous, and this cruel and dastardly mob slunk away in haste out of the theatre, then nearly quite dark.

And if "considerations infinite" did not make

against it, considerations to which theatres, with their whole treasures of either instruction or amusement, are indeed *nothing*, I could always wish the MILITARY to act on such occasions; because, when the storm *rages*, any other action is very *bad acting* indeed. Nothing but the fear of their *lives* will alarm our rabble sufficiently to quiet them.

Dibdin, this year, invented for Mr. Harris, a very clever pantomime, called Harlequin's Almanack, or the *Four Seasons*. It was quite a magazine of changes, and the scenery was beautifully painted by Hollogan, Whitmore, and Cresswell.

On the 11th of January, 1802, Mr. Kemble allowed R. Palmer to *attempt* the character of Falstaff, in the first part of Henry IV. He had the bustle and the roar of an old stager, who might have been endured in Pistol, but never advanced to the *brain* of Falstaff. To see how grossly unfounded theatrical pretensions will sometimes be: here was an actor of no *marked* comic humour, seldom seen too in any parts of more than slight importance, bold enough to try to *swagger* through the compilation of *all* humours, the "mountain "of delight," —

"The COMIC WORLD in *one*."

For thus Sir John is characterised by Garrick, in an *Ode*, remarkably true as to character, however defective in the higher tone of poetry.

Mr. Kemble and Wroughton were the Hotspur

and King Henry, and very admirable indeed was the skill they both displayed. Only that one wanted *more* of it, I thought Kemble's Hotspur quite upon a par with his *fifth* Harry.

On the 15th, Mr. Lewis's tragedy of *Alfonso*, King of Castile, was brought out at Covent Garden Theatre. This writer was a man of talent, and one of the *coolest* conversers that I ever knew. It was only in his inventions, or perhaps imitations, that he revelled in guilt and horror. His fancy teemed with monsters; — treason, frenzy, lust, poison, stabbing, shooting, parricide, suicide; the dungeon, the battle, and that MINE of dramatic wealth, a *blow up*, with the usual garb of language for such members, extravagant and bombastic rants, and such a prodigy as Alfonso stalked portentously before a gaping croud.

I should really sicken, to tell the story of this tragedy, which embraces *every one* of the charming characteristics just enumerated. But let me not defraud the meritorious. Mrs. Litchfield, in the disgusting Ottilia, was extremely powerful; the Johnstones, male and female, did, I think, full justice to the author; and the *virtues* of Orsino sat *unusually* well upon Cooke. I remember, it was a full *hour* too long; some critics said FOUR.

The Hon. Mr. Spencer, on the 22d, exhibited Miss Decamp in a very pleasing musical entertainment, called *Urania*. There is a print of her in this character, and not very unlike. Charles

Kemble was a prince of a preternatural turn, whose illuminated mind is devoted to unseen intelligences, etherial spirits, and the whole rabble of the Rosicrusian system, by which vanity has been led to presume peculiar gifts, and not the wisest of our race have fancied themselves superior to their "even Christian." By a trick he falls in love with the Princess Urania.

The Popes, in the month of January, passed to Drury Lane Theatre, and were both well received. Among Mr. Kemble's revivals in this, his last season, were the *Distressed Mother*, the *Mourning Bride*, the *Orphan*, the *Double Dealer*, and the *Winter's Tale*.

At the other house, T. Dibdin's very entertaining opera of the *Cabinet* began its musical course on the 9th of February, and as my readers are perfectly acquainted with a piece so popular and amusing, I hardly need to preserve more in this work than the names of a perfect *concert* of composers, who joined in the music of the Cabinet — Reeve, Moorhead, Davie, Corri, and Braham; and to add that, for vocal strength, it had the powers of Braham, Incledon, and Storace; and that of acting merit, it boasted of Munden, Fawcett, Emery, and Blanchard; Mrs. H. Johnston, Mrs. Mattocks, and Mrs. Davenport.

It is not *dramatically* true, that, "when things "are at the worst, they will mend." Mr. Cumber-

land had been writing himself *down*, with a zealous rapidity quite unequalled, and on the 2d of March he distressed his friends before and behind the curtain equally, by a non-descript, called *Lovers' Resolutions*. It *was* heard to the end, and properly withdrawn by the author.

I dare say, that it is at present but *partially* known, that the concert of ancient music was once given in Tottenham Street; however inconveniently the rooms at that time were situated for the attendance of the higher orders. A dilletanti society, in March 1802, opened the place for the performance of French two-act comedies and proverbs — the subscribers paid five guineas each, and one guinea in lieu of the Pic-nic. As they needed wine at their collations, and none could be sold there, so Mrs. Gilpin's own resource,

> "They would be furnished with their own,
> Which is both bright and clear."

Six bottles composed a single quota; half white, half red. The whole, no doubt, originated with a set of ruined emigrants from France, whom exile and poverty still found gay, and therefore anxious for the *spectacle*, if they even exhibited *themselves*. Among the performers, I find the name of my old friend, M. de Nogent, a gentleman of the most triumphant temper, that ever blessed a human creature. In society, the gentlest, blandest being that I ever

knew. Contented with little, unaffected and diverting; he was better than Harlequin to a child, and more than a physician to its father.

On the 9th of March, after the Beggar's Opera, Mr. Kemble, in full mourning, came forward, and in the name of the proprietors announced, that on Thursday next, that theatre would be closed, on account of the funeral of the Most Noble Francis Duke of Bedford. This tribute of respect to the ground landlord of the edifice was feelingly approved by the audience. His grace's character is matter now of history; but charity may hope, that it is more accurately drawn by Mr. Fox, though impassioned at the moment by recent loss and remembered kindness, than by Mr. Burke, irritated by attack, and resenting an injury. But I am sensible that, in a great degree, party feeling will long continue to decide between compositions so opposite in their character and tendency. I leave upon my page, with pleasure, the most striking paragraph of Mr. Fox's eulogy.

"Let it not be thought, to whatever degree I "may be supposed to feel the obligations of private "gratitude or affection, or in whatever light I may "view actions, which whether in relation to the "largest and most important, or to the very least "concerns of my life, will endear his memory to "my heart to the latest hour of it; let it not be "supposed, that I have taken this unusual oppor-"tunity of expressing them, only to strew flowers

" over his grave. No, sir; it is for the sake of " impressing his great example upon the public; " it is that men may see it, that they may feel it, " that they may talk of it in their domestic circles, " and hold it up, wherever it can be imitated, to " the imitation of their children and posterity."

The Duke died of the operation for strangulated *hernia*, in the 37th year of his age.

It was on the 24th of the month that Mr. Kemble presented his revival of the *Winter's Tale*, in all the splendor of decoration and power of acting, that he could impress upon it. I have already remarked the studies of Mrs. Siddons after the antique; in Paulina's chapel, she now stood one of the noblest statues, that even Grecian taste ever invented. The figure composed something like one of the muses in profile. The drapery was ample in its folds, and seemingly stony in its texture. Upon the magical words, pronounced by Paulina, " Musick; awake her: strike;" the sudden action of the head absolutely *startled*, as though such a miracle had really vivified the marble; and the descent from the pedestal was equally graceful and affecting. In Leontes Mr. Kemble was every thing that either feeling or taste could require; and the affection of Paulina never had a representative equal to Mrs. Powell. The Perdita was a very delicate and pretty young lady of the name of Hickes, thus much I remember of her; but whether she had more or fewer requisites than other candi-

dates for this lovely character, I am now unable to decide. I incline to think that this part is one of the few upon the stage that never was adequately performed. It is so difficult, at the proper age of the debutante, to find a simplicity, almost rustic, combining with the princely impulses that urge their way either to brave disaster, or partake the kindling wonders of unexpected restoration. Our stage princesses are so seldom personally at their ease, and are too sensible of an audience, to be much like the royal virgin. *Our* Perdita seems, in spite of the fifth act of the play, condemned *never* "to be found."

Perhaps no revival ever drew greater crowds than this did.

At Covent Garden, Fawcett invented a terrible robber, called *Brazen Mask*, who bursts through all fastnesses, and seems something supernatural; and Mr. Cooke, on the 10th of April, acted Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant in Macklin's *Man of the World*, for the first time in London. Although I myself thought the veteran a better impersonation of his own conceptions, yet Mr. Kemble expressed the most unqualified admiration of Mr. Cooke's performance, and said, "that comedy had nothing "like it." If any one should remark sagaciously, that "he never said this, nor anything like it, of "his *tragedy*:" I answer, that he did not want candour enough to make such an admission, had he really thought it; but it was *impossible* for him to

think so; his conception of all tragedy was of another CLASS — but I need not repeat myself.

There is frequently about managers a desire to profit out of the regular course of business. General Conway's comedy, called *False Appearances*, had been thus smuggled into Drury Lane Theatre, and now a second importation, from some of the family, followed, under the title of *Fashionable Friends*. Rumour stated it to have been found among Lord Orford's papers; and it was acted, it seems, at Strawberry Hill, by a set of *fashionable friends*, I trust of a "better leer" than those of the comedy; who literally, for their *hypocrisy* and *treachery*, their *indecency* and their *sensuality*, ought to have been *executed* in the last act, as an example to an age, of which they pretended to be a specimen. If it can be fairly fathered upon neither the General, nor *Horace*, perhaps it might be the *enfant trouvé* of Richard Bentley, not the commentator, but his son, who, with various talents, did nothing to the *purpose*, in a life of unwilling and sometimes rebellious dependance.

On the second night, 23d March, it was decidedly withdrawn.

The reader of stage history, if, like myself, he have really *seen* and *known* many eminent performers, will, like me, suffer pain, NOT *equal* to his enjoyment, (for such a measure never can be dealt,) but still *considerable* pain, when, in the decline of

life, a great actor quits a profession of which he has been the distinguished ornament.

I have announced many of these closing scenes, in the course of this work, and the majority of them have unfortunately withdrawn from the stage what, most favourably considered, can never be *speedily* replaced; I mean MATURE EXCELLENCE. The 24th of May, 1802, was saddened by the farewell of Mr. King, whose merits, as I always warmly felt them, so I trust they have received from me a suitable and characteristic encomium. He was the father of that respectable circle of performers, who had been bred in the school of Garrick, and who continued through life (none more zealously than Mr. King), to bear testimony to the excellence of their great master.

Mr. King had latterly been a good deal distressed by failure of memory, and he needed a very painful tensity of care, to keep even his *old* studies in tolerable condition. However, he acted his favourite, Sir Peter Teazle in the School for Scandal, with considerable effect, for the last time — though his face bore rather too evident signs of the ravages of age: indeed, it at all times was very strongly marked, and not flexible to many changes of expression.

At the termination of the comedy, he came forward to address the audience in lines, which Mr. Cumberland had written for him; and Charles Kemble, with the graceful attention of *Orlando* to

the *old Adam* of As You Like It, came on with him, in order to give the word, if, in his agitation, Mr. King should be for a moment at a loss. I was anxious to see accurately how the great comedian struggled with his feelings, and placed myself immediately under him. His eye showed but little—but his lip trembled, and his voice faltered. A few lines of the address will merit to be here preserved.

> " Whilst in my heart those feelings yet survive,
> That keep respect and gratitude alive —
> Feelings which, though all others should decay,
> WILL BE THE LAST THAT TIME CAN BEAR AWAY."

The uneasy notion, that defect must need indulgence, is beautifully put.

> " Who, that retains the sense of brighter days,
> Can sue for PARDON, while he pants for PRAISE?
> On well-earn'd fame the mind with pride reflects,
> But PITY *sinks* the man whom it *protects*."

Amid the thunders of applause, which the spectators bestowed upon a service, an able and finished service, of FIFTY-FOUR years, Mrs. Jordan advanced to lead off the highly-honoured actor, and she conducted him to a seat in the Green Room.

After a little pause, that he might recover from the shock he had just sustained, Mr. Dowton requested that he would take a cheerful draught out of a silver cup, which his brothers and sisters of the theatre begged of him to accept, with the accom-

panying salver, as a mark of their admiration and grateful regard. Suitable return to this was made by Mr. King, who, in the expression of his sensibility, assured them that, if his health permitted, he should gratify himself by frequently coming among them. The motto on the cup is happy beyond parallel. It is from Henry V. Act 5.

> " If he be not *fellow* with the best king,
> Thou shalt find him the *best* KING of good fellows."

The cup was then passed round, and all the children of Thespis drank *the* KING's health. Who shall say that the decline of life is divested of its comforts? The slope sun, westering fast and hastening to its descent, sends up a reviving gleam of radiance to cheer the passenger, before the shades of evening finally enfold him, and he must journey on his way with, at *best*, subsidiary light.

On the 24th of June the theatre closed for the season, with Shakspeare's comedy of Twelfth Night and the Flitch of Bacon. Mr. Kemble made the usual acknowledgments for the proprietors and the performers. It was now understood publicly that his connection with the theatre of Drury was at an end, and that he had determined to pass some months in a tour upon the continent.

The fact was, that he had been in treaty, through Mr. Morris, a very amiable friend, and a dramatic writer, for the purchase of one FOURTH of the Drury Lane property: — but Morris was a very

able lawyer, and the concern could not make him out a *title* on which he thought it advisable for Mr. Kemble to risk his whole fortune; the treaty therefore broke off, and Mr. Kemble carried his offer to the rival theatre.

I shall in course take care, in the notice of this transfer of the Kemble family from the stage of Garrick to that of Rich, to avoid all comments drawn from the event. What *primâ facie* appeared to me, for I am indifferent as to any clamour at the time, was that I never could obtain, even from my dear friend himself, any reason for his eager desire to become a purchaser. Suppose, for instance, he was convinced, *communibus annis*, that theatres were *not* losing concerns; he must often have experienced failures from accidental causes, quite out of the controul of the most provident manager that ever existed. A wet season, a severe winter, public calamity, or public caprice, any or all of these, would at times occasion difficulty, *without* the surer opposition of other not less formidable circumstances; such as co-proprietors long radicated in the concern, of great name, and powers and influence, whom it might be frequently impracticable to conciliate, and certainly ruinous either to thwart or indulge.

Suppose him to have paid down £30,000, or some other large sum, to Mr. Sheridan, as the price of his fourth share, it followed, in course, that the money must have paid off, at best, some of the

embarrassments of the house; or it would give him only a legal title to a bankrupt concern. If thus bestowed, what was afterwards to supply the even *moderate* demands of a man with the high rank in society which Mr. Sheridan, on the score of his talents, was obliged to maintain? He never *did* depend upon party — his political conduct was marked by some sturdy features of *independence*. As a member of administration, his dearest friends confessed that he was not calculated for regular application. He was too indolent for office, and too proud at any time to be bought. Richardson was as indolent as himself.

Surely, surely, the mere "*whistling* of a name," as one of our poets expresses it, or "the fine notion "of a busy man," in the language of Cowley, ought to have been minor objects to Mr. Kemble, who by professional talent alone, at least commanded near THREE THOUSAND a year, while he had his health; without a care, because without a risk.* He had seen the *signs* of these times, and been himself, for others, obliged to obey them. The rage for *spectacle* he saw ruined a theatre in its wardrobe and painting-room. There could be no hope that the moderate days of Garrick would ever return. He had a decent fortune, or he would not have purchased. His sister was even wealthy — and he had himself no children.

* Mr. Kemble's salary, as actor and manager, was £56. 14*s.* per week.

I am myself convinced, however irreconcileable such a thing might be to his general prudence, that he expected to survive those with whom he should connect himself; and that he really then ambitioned a theatre, to be called exclusively after his name. As a proof of this, afterwards, in his agreement with Mr. Harris, an additional clause was attached to the deed, by which he was, on the death of the chief proprietor, to have an *option* of purchasing THE WHOLE at a specific sum, £150,000.

The clamour to which I have above alluded started from persons connected with the theatre, who endeavoured to excite odium against the members of a family, which, they said, "had made their "fortunes under the roof of Drury, and now left "it to its fate, to carry all their talents and their "connexions to the rival house." But I have sufficiently shown, that they were very disagreeably situated as to the salaries for which they laboured, and they were large creditors of the concern. Even patience itself cannot be entirely without limits.

The Haymarket season was rather unsuccessful. A three-act comedy, which is rather strongly attributed to Morton, and called *Beggar my Neighbour*, fell under the displeasure it excited: as it was not printed, I cannot, however willing, "dispute the "judgment of the senate;" besides that it will readily be conceived that Morton, in any dramatic work, would not write meanly, though he might employ his pains upon an unthankful subject.

A farce, by Oulton, called the Sixty Third Letter, in the character of *Dulcet* by Fawcett, afforded rather a novelty; a footman ballad-mad, who cannot contain himself, if he hear a street organ. But then this is *Farce!* — utter absurdity rewarded by broad-faced laughter.

The success, in Paris, of the *Jugement de Salomon*, by M. Caigniez, led me to translate and adapt it for Colman's, under the title of the *Voice of Nature*. I am fully sensible of the impropriety of such a subject NOW, either *religiously* or *morally* considered. And I wish no more of it to be remembered than my thanks to the very excellent performers of the characters. It however excited the feelings of the audience very strongly, and was serviceable to the theatre.

As far as I remember, the Burletta called *Fairy Revels* was the first of those pieces, which have littered our stages with precocious children; some of whom must be admitted to have been prodigies. When we consider the *flattery* or the *severity* that were necessary to fix the attention of infancy, and make it do the work of *maturity*; when we add to this AVARICE in the parent, the danger of late hours, and the indecency of public exposure as they respect the children; the early food supplied to *vanity*, and, as a consequence, the utter loss of *modesty*, that early and most charming grace of youth; even a corrupt people must shudder, if they are troubled with the slightest reflection in their amusements.

Mr. Colman, this season, announced to his performers, and at the close of it to the public, that he could engage no one who was not at liberty to join him on the 15th May, and continue with him till the 15th September. This struggle has often been made, and made in vain. The summer manager may "skir the country round" and try to collect an *independent* troop of at least kindred merit with those which sustain the winter houses. If he succeed, even the excellent soon yield to the stronger temptation of winter engagements, and then as to him become *limited;* if he fail, his inferiority will be noticed and his theatre deserted; for even the *decent* will not be borne, if better can be had.

The best part of Mr. Colman's invitation to the public was "the pledge of his own farther attempts "at dramatic composition, whose pen he hoped, "however long they had encouraged it, was not "yet quite worn out in their service." The whole address, at great length, was very ardently delivered by Fawcett, the acting manager, after the Voice of Nature.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

SEASON OF 1802-3.—JOHN BANNISTER STAGE MANAGER.—MR. GRAHAM AND HIS BOARD.—DWYER.—COOKE'S HAMLET.—CORRECT TEXT, HOW IMPORTANT.—COLLINS.—S. KEMBLE IN FALSTAFF.—LEWIS SUDDENLY STRUCK WITH APOLEXY.—DELAYS AND BLUNDERS.—TALE OF MYSTERY.—MELO DRAME, WHAT.—A HOUSE TO BE SOLD.—MRS. LITCHFIELD.—POPE IN KEMBLE'S CHARACTERS.—FAMILY QUARRELS.—THE JEWS.—MRS. SIDDONS DISTURBED IN IRELAND.—DUBLIN LYING-IN HOSPITAL.—HER LETTER TO F. E. JONES.—HOLCROFT'S HEAR BOTH SIDES.—CAPT. CAULFIELD'S HAMLET.—RANGER.—DIMOND'S HERO OF THE NORTH.—COLMAN'S JOHN BULL—ITS MERITS.—A MONODRAME.—DEATH OF MR. RICHARDSON.—SINGULAR CONDUCT OF SHERIDAN.—MRS. POPE, THE SECOND, DIES.—SUMMER THEATRE.—CHARLES MATTHEWS.—MRS. WIGGINS.—ALLINGHAM.—COLMAN'S EPILOGUE TO THE MAID OF BRISTOL.—ASTLEY'S AMPHITHEATRE AGAIN BURNT.

The departure of Mr. Kemble from Drury Lane Theatre, with the consequent loss of the other members of his family, threw an almost impenetrable cloud over its future destiny. Every thing

seemed to indicate unavoidable ruin. Mrs. Siddons had gone to Ireland. Mr. Charles Kemble still remained, and very awkward it was to remain, in a concern where his duty compelled him to serve a cause, which his family were considered to have deserted. With all his temper and prudence many things must have occasionally reached his ear, not calculated by any delicacy for such a hearer.

My pleasant friend, John Bannister, undertook the stage department, for which he was exceedingly well qualified; and in some way or other, HOW can only be accounted for by the *mania*, which a theatre excites, and so seldom cures, Mr. Graham, the magistrate, seated himself at the head of a board of management; the other four members, I think, interfered but little. Dramatic productions were read and considered by Mr. Graham; and, what was of greater importance to their authors, his cheques upon the house of Hammersley were *frequently* paid without difficulty.

"Magnus ab integro .... nascitur ordo."

Among the accessions to this company were Dwyer, who was a very passable Belcour, and Cherry, who, as an actor, was the best substitute for King, and sometimes Dodd, that modern times have seen, until Mr. W. Farren, who probably never saw King, returned him to us "renewed in all his "strength, and fresh with life." It gives me no common pleasure to pay this passing compliment

to the son of my old friend. After long experience in the school of studious and finished acting, I pronounce this gentleman to be *really* an ARTIST. He sees everything in a character; he neglects nothing in his preparation of it, internal or external; a few more such men, with their *whole* minds in the profession, and we might be stopped in the descent of the art, and find it as intelligent as it will always be amusing.

On the 27th of September, at the other theatre, Mr. Cooke ventured to perform what he chose to think, Hamlet. I am pretty conversant with the text of Shakspeare, original and derived. I know the creeping infusion of Hanmer's *particles*, and the daring *alterations* of Warburton's lofty confidence. I also know the almost incredible ignorance of our ancient language, common to all the early commentators. But such a text as Mr. Cooke then spoke in the part of Hamlet, I never yet read, and doubt whether it can be found in print. George Steevens used to *talk* about the town, Harry Rowe, the trumpeter's edition of Macbeth; and a delicious thing I see it is, now lying before me. But Cooke's Hamlet was the greater effort. His "definement suffered entire perdition — it was "not possible to understand him in a mother "tongue." "Now this,"— stretching beyond poor Cooke, to all actors and to all times,—"is villanous." It is not coxcomry, it is neglectful impudence, or

insulting ignorance. To be perfect in the words is always in the power of humble diligence. I have seen, in this duty of the performer, such a man as Claremont shame an actor of twenty pounds a week. The great actor may here say, "Look at the comparative length of our respective characters." I do so; and merely add, that the lower actor, through the season, probably performs TWENTY different parts in tragedy, comedy, opera, and farce, for the great man's one. But the audience should cure this: they would, if they were as well acquainted with their authors as the French are. How Mr. Cooke *acted* Hamlet is now not worth talking about. It is quite useless to look into the detail of one mass of awkward error,—besides to the *natural* admirers of *ungraceful* men, I should expatiate in vain; no "euphrasy * or rue" will purge their visual faculty. To the cultivated I have said enough.

Drury Lane this season had no slight acquisition in Collins, from the Southampton Theatre, an actor not unlike that exquisite rustic, Blanchard of Covent Garden, whose plough-boy will long "whistle "o'er the lea" in the ear of the true lover of the art. Stephen Kemble, too, came again to town, and presented in, perhaps, rather more than person, a *natural* Falstaff. He jested, in a prologue written by himself, with his "huge hill of flesh," and Bannister, who delivered it, was often cheered by

* "The herb *eye-bright* and the herb of *grace*."

excessive laughter. But the reader shall judge of the excitement by a few lines.

" Upon the *northern* coast by chance we caught him,
And hither in a *broad-wheel'd waggon* brought him;
For in a *chaise* the varlet ne'er could enter,
And no *mail-coach* on such a fare would venture."

If he should be deficient in the wit and humour of the part—

" He then to better men will leave his *sack*,
And go, as *ballast*, in a collier back."

The impression upon my mind is that the *natural* bulk on the stage distresses with an unlucky association of *disease;* and that the *made-up* knight is the only agreeable Sir John. Mr. Stephen Kemble was a man of reading, and an actor of vigour and firmness. His voice was loud and overpowering, and sometimes, in course, deficient in modulation. He was, perhaps, best at the Boar's Head, after the robbery — though he was good also at Shrewsbury, displayed the flimsy texture of *honour* with much discrimination, and claimed the reward of Percy's death in a novel mode that drew down repeated thunders of applause. His Falstaff brought several excellent houses.

On the 18th of October, while rehearsing the part of Sapling, in a new comedy by Reynolds, called *Delays and Blunders*, Mr. Lewis, in the last act, suddenly stopped and seemed to be struck by

apoplexy. He uttered a sort of shriek, whirled round as if giddy, and dropped upon the stage in a fit. He was first bled in the arm, but without the smallest effect; Dr. Kennedy and my poor friend, Wilson, were soon at his side, and by cupping they at length relieved the head, to which there had been noticeable, early in the day, a strong determination of the blood. I do not know a more disagreeable service than attending, in winter time, a stage rehearsal; the bleak currents of air that assail you in all directions, are, I believe, extremely injurious; and against this, from the nature of the place, no remedy can be provided.

The first considerable effort of the new management of Drury, was the revival of Kane O'Hara's Midas. Their machinist, by a false stage, took up his celestials in a very magnificent way; and by the help of good singing from Kelly, Sedgwick, and Dignum, and the ladies, Mountain, little Bland, and the still less Tyrer (Mrs. Liston), with Suett in Midas, the piece prospered exceedingly.

Lewis being recovered from his very alarming attack, on the 30th of October, *Delays and Blunders* appeared for the first time at Covent Garden. The serious incidents were in the true German taste. The *murder* of a father-in-law — an expected *trial* for the murder to open the play, and the confinement of a lady on a false accusation of *lunacy*. But I am quite sure such incidents must have been as uncomfortable to my gay friend as they could have

been to any devoted admirer of Farquhar; (no one indeed more so than *himself;*) and that he cursed his compliance with the rage until the moment of counting his profits. To venture upon any detail, how his comic incidents were combined with all this criminal horror, is quite impossible — he, however, in compliment to his father's profession, *invented* an honest attorney, and Paul Postpone, in the hands of Fawcett, produced the six and eightpences in the seasonable number. A sprig of nobility, Lord Orlando de Courcy, was cut away from the piece on the second night, and a wretched epilogue by Mrs. Mattocks, was *brayed* down by an ass in the gallery, to the infinite delight of the pit and boxes. A few tags, therefore, at the end of the play were spoken afterwards by six of the characters, and the piece rose nightly in reputation, though not, if I remember, to Reynolds's *first* rank of praise.

The 18th of November was to be marked with a permanent acquisition in Holcroft's Tale of Mystery. The *dumb* eloquence of Farley, and the *energy* of H. Johnstone, operating upon a really interesting French story, with some very speaking music by Dr. Busby, rendered this *melo-drame* one of the most powerful things of its class.

As the term *melo-drame* then affectedly burst upon us from the French, and no precise idea seemed attached to the compound, I shall throw away at worst but a line or two, upon some kind of

explanation. The Greek word ΜΕΛΟΣ (mélos) is a synonime with *membrum;* and therefore used to signify *carmen*, a song of regular parts, or recurring measures: but it is hazardous to interpret a French usage by the aid of our lexicons. As to the melo-drame, therefore, we may be still thankful for the explanation, which that acute critic Geoffroy has left us. "A melo-drame (says he) "is an *opera* in prose, which is merely *spoken;* and "in which music discharges the duty of a *valet de* "*chambre*, because her office is simply to announce "the actors."

On the 17th, the French furnished Mr. Cobb with *la maison à vendre*, a musical farce, acted at Drury Lane, under the same title, "A House to "be Sold:"—and thus the bill of the day, stuck upon the walls of the theatre, was visibly called "a fraud upon the stamp office," a public "adver-"tisement" for sale, that paid no *duty*. As a not infrequent sequel, crowds of people went in to *see* the house, but nobody could be found to *buy* it.

Mrs. Litchfield, on the 19th, broke away alike from modern comi-tragedy and tragi-comedy, and acted the Widow Brady in a style of the greatest excellence. Her tone was inimitably true, and in *spirit*, I thought her very near indeed to Mrs. Crawford herself.

Pope, this year, sustained what very few actors would have dared, and came with credit from the attempt. He acted *Leon*, and *Leontes*, and the

Abbè de l'epèe, after Mr. Kemble, upon the very site of that great man's triumphs. It would be insulting to say, that he approached his predecessor; it would be unjust not to mention, that he was greatly and properly applauded.

On the 15th of December, after acting Shylock, S. Kemble, in the dress of Falstaff, took his leave of the town, in a second address written by himself; and ended with the warm wish that the audience, passing over his imperfections, might say at his departure,

"We could have better spar'd a better man."

On the 18th of this month, T. Dibdin's comic opera, called Family Quarrels, met with a very stormy reception: Fawcett, in the character of Proteus, becomes a Jew and sells slippers with the "patient shrug" of the peculiar people. It was Saturday, and Braham sang in the opera, two good reasons for gathering the Hebrews together: a day on which they dare not *work* seems, at its close, allowably to terminate in play. There might be some hint given abroad that they were to be served up to contempt, and Argus no sooner puts his eye upon the presumed Jew, than he exclaims, "I "never have any *dealings* with your people." Here was indeed a *vital* attack, an injury upon the back of an insult.

The very great address of Fawcett, who was sent on; his *general* particularity — his "*that* part" of

the audience; "*any* part" of the audience: — his mode of letting them understand that Dibdin, in rather a complimentary way, had been to Duke's Place before — all really afforded a high treat at the time; and he had carried his point, but that some of those horrible brochures, called *Books of the Songs*, with their usual grammar and point and print, had fallen into the hands of the Christians. Jerusalem was *not* to be delivered.

There was a song in this mass of waste-paper, which Fawcett went off without singing; the reason was, that it would have been throwing oil upon fire. The Christians *read* it in their glimmering studies, and bursting with laughter at its jokes, roared vociferously for its delivery, that they might enjoy the torture of the Jews. Fawcett told them *why* he omitted it, but if they insisted upon having it, he was ready to obey their pleasure. Accordingly he sang it, and was *charitably* encored. Effectually trodden down and vanquished, all opposition was at length silenced on the part of the poor Jews; who amidst long ages of persecution, can find little that is consolatory to their feelings, except the comedy of Cumberland, which bears their name, and, I *hope*, records their virtue.

The music of this opera, by various composers, was often beautiful; but the piece itself, I thought, even in its very humour, below the pitch of Dibdin's ready and whimsical mind.

I have already stated that Mrs. Siddons went to

Ireland, upon the family retirement from Drury Lane Theatre. It was this lady's fate to be continually assailed on the same ground, — *want of liberality*. The reader remembers the old persecution of her as to performers' benefits. She had been violently accused, this winter, of refusing her aid to a public charity, the Dublin Lying-in Hospital. The trustees of that institution publicly contradicted the calumny, in a way that ought to have been satisfactory; they said, "Mrs. Siddons had most "certainly never *refused* to act for them, and, in- "deed, had never been requested to do so." However, something as to her having been expected to act for *one* of the public charities of that kingdom, is admitted by Mrs. Siddons herself; whose perfect vindication it were cruel either to omit or curtail, as it does credit to her name and character. I therefore preserve her letter to the Irish manager, Jones.

"SIR, *Dublin, Dec.* 8, 1802.

"I TAKE the liberty of addressing you on a subject which has caused me much uneasiness. Public censure is, under any circumstances, well calculated to wound our feelings, but it is peculiarly distressing when it is heightened by injustice. That reports, most injurious to me, have been circulated, can no longer be doubted, when I assure you that I understand it is generally believed that I refused to play for the Lying-in Hospital. On this subject, you

will, I am sure, be as anxious to do me justice, as I am solicitous to vindicate myself in the eyes of the public. I therefore beg leave to bring to your recollection, that you did me the honour of calling on me, at my house in Park-street, last summer, when it was liberally proposed on your part, as it was most cheerfully-accepted on mine, that I should perform for some charity. You also recollect, that it was considered by us both as a compliment justly due to Lady Hardwicke, that she should have the *choice* of the particular charity for which I was to perform; and you thought it likely that her Excellency would give her preference to the Lying-in Hospital. You also, Sir, must remember, that I was not only willing, but desirous, of exerting myself for the benefit of so laudable an institution.

"Why so amiable a purpose was not immediately promoted, I cannot even guess; but sure I am, that its postponement cannot be attributed to any backwardness on my part. The same motives which actuated me then, are no less powerful now; and it will give me infinite pleasure, if, by the exertion of any powers I possess, I can be able to promote an important object of public utility.

"And now, Sir, if I may be permitted to speak of myself as a private individual, I have only to regret the sad necessity imposed upon me of vindicating my character from the imputation of a failing as unamiable as, I trust, it is foreign to my nature. I regret that I should be constrained, from

unfortunate circumstances to endeavour to rescue myself from an obloquy, which, I hope, I have never incurred by my conduct. I regret that the country in which I am obliged to do so should be Ireland.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) S. SIDDONS."

"*To Frederic Edward Jones, esq.*"

The great actress had speedily a real affliction to sustain; when she wrote the above letter she was unacquainted with the death of her father, which occurred two days before the date of it. The reader will find a communication of that event to Mr. Kemble while upon his travels, and his very affecting commemoration of his virtues.

"Fashion," said the best writer of comic prologues, "in every thing bears sovereign sway;" Reynolds, in October, had started that black swan, an honest attorney; and Holcroft, with his usual feeling as to *innovations*, determined to bring him into full practice: by the 29th of January he exhibited his friend Fairfax, in a comedy properly named Hear *both* Sides. Our lawyer is assailed throughout four acts by a storm of execration from the very miserable victims of his persecution. He hears the charges with anger, and threatens ample revenge. At the proper moment, he calls his accusers together, and solemnly puts himself upon

his trial, when it evidently appears that he had been all the time deliberately and wisely labouring for the *benefit* of those, whom superficially he had seemed to *injure*. No doubt exists of the perfect propriety of acquitting the *honnête criminel*, and amazement settles in grateful affection. But though well acted, it was not relished by the audience; indeed it was somewhat carelessly written.

" His TRUTH was too *stale*, or too *feeble* his FICTION,
And they could not endure his *anomalous* DICTION."
MAUSOL.

It is very seldom indeed, that I have considered myself warranted to intrude any *amateur* performances upon the notice of my readers, but the debût of a Captain Caulfield, of the guards, on the 2d of February, at Covent Garden, in the character of Hamlet, merits something in the way of exception. Acting is an art that must be practised, as well as a science that must be studied. Captain Caulfield had in private diligently applied himself, and had acquired much of the theory and the practice. His fault arose out of his profession. He had probably accustomed himself to consider those " who berattle the common stages" as vulgars, and conceived a something more *exquisite*, as required to denote either the gentleman or the prince. In consequence he fell under the censure of Hamlet himself.

" *Ham.* — He did comply with his dug, before he sucked it. Thus has he, and many more of the same breed, that I know

the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time, and outward habit of encounter; a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions." Act 5. sc. ii.

Captain Caulfield accordingly was the most "curled darling," the genteelest thing in nature; always in attitudes, and merely shifting from one elegance of personal display to another. In certain society this display of himself had excited peculiar admiration, and his admirers cherished the best hopes of his public excellence; — but though he was occasionally animated and correct, and even impressive, the powers of voice seemed to fail under any protracted exertion, and he therefore tried next the character of *Ranger*, that his gay gentility might carry him through at a smaller expense of the lungs. But to the general astonishment, as a rake he was only the modern substitute, a *fribble*, and being found *flat* and *spiritless*, the mantling of his theatric honours soon ceased; and I have no pleasure in following him into a retirement of difficulty, from which at all events his merits as an actor were not strong enough to deliver him.

On the 19th of February, Mr William Dimond, son of the patentee of the Bath and Bristol Theatres, brought out at Drury Lane Theatre, an historical play with music, of the Colman cast, called the Hero of the North. His interest was nearly the same with that of Brooke's Gustavus Vasa, except that it was treated with less of tragic

gloom, and unvaried blank verse, and shared in the now preferred features of the romantic drama. Our young author had derived the usual intricacy of dilemma from the celebrated instance in Mr. Puff's tragedy. Gustavus menaces a fort garrisoned by Carlowitz and his Danes. The besieged bring out to execution Gunilda, the sister of Gustavus — that hero resiles from the test — now is the lady's turn for heroism, and 'egad she refuses life on such conditions. Your Danes, enraged, in course, at what they ought to admire, are about to plunge their daggers into her breast, when Carlowitz, who has broken from his allegiance, yet retains a nobleness of soul, commands them to *deliver* her, and trust to their own courage for defence. Gustavus is not a man to be thus *virtuously* braved, and he immediately volunteers a personal conflict with Carlowitz. This palpable hit throws the rebel upon his knees in penitence, and in its result seats our Hero of the North upon the throne of Sweden.

But let me say that as a spectacle it was exceedingly picturesque; that its sentiments were glowing, and its interest varied and well mixed together; and that neither the ear nor the eye had cause to disdain the Hero of the North.

The Gustavus of Brooke had one astonishing effect, when in the year 1805, sixty-six years after its production, it was licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, — it absolutely *unsealed* the eyes of Master Betty's admirers. His failure in Gustavus was the

more astonishing, because, though frequently at that time grossly *ignorant*, he certainly never in his action wanted SPIRIT.

On the 5th of March, Covent Garden Theatre exhibited the most popular of Mr. Colman's plays, John Bull. It seized upon general admiration as by a charm, and has held it as by a patent. Of a play so well known it is useless to detail the incidents. The fable is excessively slight: Peregrine lands, like Hamlet, from a shipwreck, and produces all the ensuing events. *He* delivers the daughter — *He* enriches her father — *He* supplants his younger brother Sir Simon, and secures, consequently, his son for the brazier's daughter. The *denouement* of this piece is therefore its opening; and every following event distinctly foreseen. But it would have been difficult for the author's most intimate friend to foresee the unbounded humour with which *Muckslush* heath overflows — the *triple brass* of Job Thornberry — the energy of his great scene. The pathos, moral efficacy, the character, the contrast, which, from the rise of the curtain to its fall, press continually upon you, leave a doubt whether at any exhibition you were ever made wiser, or better, or happier.

There is only one *indecorum* of which, to a prudent man or a politician, the temper of the times might have suggested the impolicy — the exhibition of a magistrate who refused to do *justice*. However rare such instances (and I sincerely believe them

to be rare), in periods of popular delusion, every aspersion upon the seat from which coercion is to proceed is eagerly caught at, and by analogy applied to cases highly dissimilar. *He* has read the trials of some of our reformers to little purpose, who has not observed that, according to the *nerve* of the person, they all strive to throw the greatest odium upon the BENCH; to represent its very convictions as any thing but convictions of the understanding; as the compromise that *place* makes with *power;* as the dread to unsettle inveterate *prejudice* and *error*, in the apprehension that tyranny itself may fall when its base gives way.

As to the mere incident of the play to which I have alluded, if Mr. Colman knew such laxity of principle to exist, it was certainly competent to him to administer the moral corrective of the drama. He was not at that time licenser! had he filled the chair of old Larpent, I will do him the justice to say, that I think he would have decided more justly, where he was himself a party, than he has made Sir Simon Rochdale do.

Incidentally I just notice, that Munden refused to act the character just named, because Fawcett's was a better part. He therefore conferred a treasure upon that valuable actor, Blanchard, who has played it twenty years together, and gained infinite credit by the ability which he has shown in it. I will preserve the original cast of John Bull: it was gloriously acted.

Peregrine, - - -	Mr. Cooke.
Sir Simon Rochdale, -	Mr. Blanchard.
F. Rochdale, - -	Mr. H. Johnston.
Lord Fitz-Balaam, -	Mr. Waddy.
Hon. T. Shuffleton, -	Mr. Lewis.
Job Thornberry - -	Mr. Fawcett.
Dan - - - - -	Mr. Emery.
Dennis Brulgruddery, -	Mr. J. Johnstone.
Lady Car. Braymore -	Mrs. H. Johnston.
Mrs. Brulgruddery -	Mrs. Davenport.
Mary Thornberry -	Mrs. Gibbs.

Johnstone sang a very whimsical Epilogue, written by the author of the comedy, to an old Irish tune: it was *encored.*

Mrs. Litchfield, on the 22d of this month, undertook, for Monk Lewis, the performance of what he called, properly enough, a monodrame, which, under the title of the *Captive*, exhibited, in one act, an accumulation of horrors, caught from the Lazar-house of Milton,

> "Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy,
> And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy.
> Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, despair
> Tended the sick busiest from couch to couch."

The actress was so powerful in this scene of miseries, that several ladies fainted; and the German taste of the author received the proper reproof from the better feeling of his countrymen.

The author just mentioned, who "supped full with horrors" on all occasions, dressed up for the

benefit of his friends, the Johnstons, his translation of Schiller's Minister, which he now called the Harper's Daughter. Cooke was to have acted in it, but he chose to quit the cabinet, and afforded H. Siddons an opportunity to distinguish himself in a very disgusting, but certainly powerful subject.

On the 9th of June, Mr. Richardson, one of the proprietors of Drury Lane, died from the effects of a ruptured blood-vessel. I formerly touched with regret upon the early close of a life, that might, under a change of habits, have been highly useful, as it was certainly ornamental. I noticed that he had his full share in the classical pleasantries of his time. He was a contributor, with Ellis and Dr. Lawrence, to the Rolliad and Probationary Odes. My pleasant and constant friend through life, Mr. Taylor, knew Richardson well before the spell of Sheridan took hold upon him; and has fondly described him to me as one of the gayest spirits about town. A man of lively imagination, great reading, sound judgment, and possessing an almost unerring perception of character.

Richardson once said a strong thing of Sheridan: "It was his sincere conviction, that could some "enchanter's wand touch him into the possession "of fortune, he would instantly convert him "into a being of the nicest honour, and most "unimpeachable moral excellence." Riches are so often quoted as the corrupters of our nature,

that I could not suppress even a *fancy* of their moral efficacy.

Sheridan had for Richardson all the affection that a careless man can have for any thing. He made a point, therefore, of going down to Egham, to see the last offices performed over his remains. Mr. Taylor says, they arrived too late by about a quarter of an hour. The clergyman had just retired from the grave. Sheridan was in an agony of grief at this disappointment; but his powerful *name*, properly enforced upon the rector, procured a polite and humane repetition of the close of the service, to enable the tardy orator to say that he had attended the funeral of his friend.

The party dined together at the Inn, and after the cloth was removed, their kindness for the deceased broke forth in *designed* testimonials to his merits. Dr. Combe was to choose the kind of stone for his mausoleum, and Sheridan himself undertook to compose a suitable inscription; but no curious stone ever covered his remains, and the promised inscription never was written. Such are the hasty pledges of recent grief, and the performances of indolent genius.

Mr. Richardson, by the kindness and munificence of the late Duke of Northumberland and other friends, had been enabled to purchase a quarter of the Drury Lane concern: and his widow and daughters in vain tried to obtain, from the late Mr. Whitbread, some compensation for the pro-

perty so unfortunately embarked: but his constant reply was, that he really had not *nerve* enough to go into the consideration of the claim; and a few renter's shares that nobody would buy, and some trifling situation in the wardrobe, was all that about 38,000*l.* ever produced to his family. On the weekly pay-list of the theatre, Sheridan's name stands charged with a regular 31*l.* 10*s.*; Richardson's, 15*l.* 15*s.*; Tom. Sheridan's, 6*l.* 10*s.*; and Grubb's, 9*l.*

There was yet another loss to this theatre during the month of June; that very interesting woman, and elegant actress, Mrs. Pope, was seized, while acting Desdemona, with an apoplectic fit on the night of the 10th, and died on the 18th of the month. She had acted Monimia, in Dublin, at the early age of 17, on the 17th of February 1790; in 1797 she was greatly admired, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the same beautiful character, and Mr. Pope married her in the year following. Mr. Shee's portrait of her, in Juliet, is a very perfect likeness of her figure and expression. It is engraved.

I am now to notice the experiment made by Colman, at the summer theatre, to form and continue a company, independent of the winter houses; to review the very valuable talents that he brought forth, and to introduce to the London public the very peculiar powers of my young friend, Charles Matthews, a man whose genius has made him, one way, the rival of Foote, and the most attractive

name among us. Colman was not a man likely, in a reasonable design, to want supporters. In the present, he found the highest and the best. The late King honoured him with a command on his second night. He had one very considerable auxiliary in Elliston, who accepted the stage management, and secured to himself the possession, as an actor, of every part, serious or comic, that he chose to play. Chapman, from Worcester, proved to be a sensible, and steady speaker. But his farcical prop was Charles Matthews, from the York company, the son of a bookseller in the Strand. His father, I think, was a dissenting teacher, in one of the *mille et une* sects, in which *pride*, under the name of *conscience*, leads men to abjure at least the *forms* of the established church. What sectarists in general think of theatres, is commonly understood. I dare say old Matthews thought the stage mania of his son an ample punishment for all the sins with which he was able to charge himself.

What Charles carried away with him from this town into the country was little beyond a *love* of mimicry. What I saw of his youthful *acting* really alarmed me for his welfare. I knew, however, that little is refused to devoted labour, and the perseverance of man in a pursuit which he loves; he probably benefited by the obstructions to his advancement. Incledon told me, that he found

him in Ireland in the most distressing state that could be imagined. It strikes me that Matthews actually formed himself, in a great degree, upon the eccentric Tate Wilkinson. In the York company, he certainly laid the foundations of that comic versatility, which, in the most rapid changes of voice and manner, and even personal appearance, made him master of the *whole surface* of life at an early period of his own. Studies of a peculiar kind, the employment of his leisure, have at length given *mind* to the external mass; and perhaps, either as to *thought* or *action*, the infinite diversities of human nature find in Matthews "a glass that features "them," and from him might be securely estimated the greater as well as less features of either national or local peculiarity.

On Colman's first night, he acted the meagre Jabal, in Cumberland's Jew, and followed it by Lingo, in the Agreeable Surprise. Matthews was a nervous man, and like the class, too much in a hurry to be rid of what he felt embarrassing; but there was enough drollery in his manner to render him at first a diverting, and soon a favourite actor.

The influence obtained by Mr. Colman at the palace, on the present trial, may be judged of by the immediate appearance of their Majesties this season; nine years having passed away, without a single visit, since the melancholy accident at their last command, on the 3d of February 1794.

Mrs. Goodall, the Floranthe of the Mountaineers, when Kemble performed Octavian, returned to the Haymarket, on the 19th of the month, to act with the younger strength of Elliston, and the company wore an appearance of duration. Mrs. Gibbs, in herself, was no slight attraction.

The farce of Mrs. Wiggins, on the 27th, gave Matthews an opportunity of convulsing the audience with laughter, in the character of a bloated country gentleman, who, running away from a termagant helpmate, finds it quite impracticable to run from the *name*. Some Mrs. Wiggins or other is for ever bursting upon a moment's quiet. This farce was written by a Mr. Allingham, of whom I know little, but that he diversified his leisure by mechanics, and disdaining the ascending power of *gas*, like the artist in Rasselas, "taught himself "the office of a fowl;" and by a very artificial construction of wings, with springs of steel, succeeded sufficiently to break his shins, in fluttering about his apartments like a dab chick.

So happy a commencement was a spur to his invention. He calculated the duration of his strength, and saw that he needed some supplement to the power of his arms. He therefore attached the *balloon* to his apparatus; which, filled with common steam, he imagined capable to sustain his weight, standing in a sort of wooden shoes, so as to leave him no care but the management of his wings. He now appeared, to himself, to have com-

bined a principle of government along with the ascending medium.

> " Thus, with expanded wings, he steer'd his flight,
> Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air,
> That felt unusual weight."
>
> PARADISE LOST.

" Thrice he assayed, and thrice in spite of skill" *burst* his balloons. Poor fellow! the experiments cost him more than two hundred pounds, and the loss of time that, dramatically employed, would have *produced* three times the money. Allingham had yet another distinction — he exchanged shots with a DAILY CRITIC in a turnip-field.

The sequel is melancholy; with an agreeable person, and a jovial temper, he led a life of unthinking gaiety; became dreadfully embarrassed in his circumstances, and died yet young the victim of disease, brought on by intemperance.

The season of 1802–3 had been one of the best that Covent Garden Theatre had ever known; and against Colman's *theatre*, they acted his *John Bull* to the 23d of June, their last night. A rough estimate carried the profits of Mr. Harris to 30,000*l.*

But notwithstanding the severe check furnished by his own genius, Colman was now doing very well in his lovely little summer box. Elliston continued to be attractive in Octavian, Sir Edward Mortimer, Gondibert, St. Pierre, and even Richard III.

Under the style of Arthur Griffinhoof, the manager produced *une folie*, as they called it in Paris, by the title of Love laughs at Locksmiths; and he contributed to Mr. Boaden's Maid of Bristol, an epilogue, which, as far as verse could do, laid bare the atrocious ambition of the Corsican. There was a *nerve* in this composition, that reminded you of the rough vigour of Churchill. In my time no lines spoken on a stage ever produced equal effect. How well he understood his object, WELLINGTON has demonstrated.

> "God! must this mushroom despot of the hour
> The spacious World encircle with his power?
> Forbid it Heaven! and forbid it man!
> Can man forbid it? YES: — the ENGLISH CAN."

The Theatres Royal were at this period not so identified with the Amphitheatre of Mr. Astley, as they have since become. They are now the winter stables of his horses, and a change of scene for the noble brutes, who *are* thought able to entertain an enlightened public, and reward the spirit of an enterprising manager. Thus, without feeling a *gratitude* for which no cause then existed, the historian of the stage records with sincere sorrow the destruction, by fire, of the Amphitheatre, a second time, on the 2d of September 1803.

A fatal neglect on the part of those, whose duty it was to see every light in the theatre extinguished, allowed some flame or spark to communicate with

combustibles collected together for occasional fire-works; and the destruction of the whole premises was known to be inevitable at the first perception of the disaster. Mrs. Woodham, the mother of Mrs. Astley, jun., who slept in an apartment in the front of the house, aged and infirm, perished in the flames. Perhaps, at least forty contiguous houses were consumed in the rapid conflagration. The distress of the sufferers, their shrieks, and the fruitless attempts to save part of their slender property, menaced as much by thieves as by the flames, composed a scene of wretchedness, to which the pecuniary loss of the Astleys, considerable as that appeared to be, was of little moment.* A liberal subscription, or a few successful seasons, may repair the losses of a theatre; but the few articles about the dwellings of the poor are accumulated with difficulty; are the produce often, and the pride of a life of labour; are seldom insured; and the loss of them is an almost hopeless destitution, that "weighs upon the heart," and hastens the already faltering feet to the last abode of infirmity and age.

* The theatre was estimated at 30,000*l.*; little or nothing was insured. The horses, by great address and perseverance, were all saved.

CHAP. II.

WEEKLY SALARIES IN MR. KEMBLE'S LAST YEAR AT DRURY LANE. — MR. KEMBLE NEGOCIATES, THROUGH MRS. INCHBALD, WITH MR. HARRIS. — SETS OUT ON HIS TRAVELS. — HIS LETTER FROM PARIS. — DESCRIPTION. — FRENCH THEATRE. — FRIENDS THERE. — LORD EGREMONT. — LORD HOLLAND. — TALMA. — NAPOLEON'S HAT. — MADRID. — LA TYRANNA. — LETTER FROM MR. KEMBLE WHILE AT MADRID — HIS ACCOUNT OF THAT CAPITAL — ITS POPULATION — ITS BUILDINGS — THEIR THEATRES — LA RITA LUNA — A BULL FIGHT — HOW HE WAS ACCOMMODATED. — CENSURES OF HIS COUNTRYMEN. — HIS OWN CORRECT FEELING. — THE DEATH OF OLD MR. KEMBLE. — HIS SON'S LETTER ON THAT EVENT. — FILIAL PIETY. — MRS. KEMBLE, HIS MOTHER. — HIS WIFE'S AFFECTION AND CHEERFULNESS. — HOW HIS FATHER'S REMAINS SHOULD BE DISTINGUISHED. — ADVICE TO HIS BROTHER CHARLES. — RETURNS TO ENGLAND. — DUTIES OF A STAGE-MANAGER. — MR. WILLIAM LEWIS — HIS DAILY HABITS — PECULIAR OPINIONS — ONCE A PROPRIETOR. — SCHISM IN THE THEATRE. — MRS. LEWIS ALARMED. — RELINQUISHES HIS SIXTH SHARE OF COVENT GARDEN. — MR. KEMBLE PURCHASES. — VALUE OF THE PROPERTY — AND DISTRIBUTION OF IT. — IMPROVEMENTS OF THE HOUSE.

Before we attend Mr. Kemble upon his travels, it may be worth while to look a little at the arrangements of the theatre which he had just quitted. The scale of expense, as to the performers, was

then, at all events, moderate. In our own times engagements have been compulsorily formed between managers and actors, which it may be quite clear the former would never concede, had they a less fearful alternative than absolute ruin or no profit. If they yield to the enormous demands and pay the salaries, they cannot *gain*, with the utmost success — if they resist demands quite wanton and really disproportioned to the talent, they are then certainly ruined, because the public will never follow substitutes of lower powers or prices.

I am, as I ought to be, quite indifferent as to the opinion which may follow my disclosure. Any influence but that of truth and justice, I hope always to disdain. But I confess I have a wish to try, at all events, to save the stage, by recalling the subject to a new and temperate examination. With this view, I publish the following authentic list of the weekly salaries of the Drury Lane company in the last season of Mr. Kemble's management, 1801-2.

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE, PAY LIST.

Mr. Kemble*	£56	14	
Bannister	17	0	
King	16	0	
Pope	13	0	
Kelly	16	0	
Wroughton	15	0	
Suett	12	0	
Dowton	8	0	
	£153	14	
Brought up	£153	14	
Mr. C. Kemble	10	0	
Barrymore	10	0	
Byrne	8	0	
R. Palmer	9	0	
Wathen	8	0	
Raymond	8	0	
Wewitzer	6	0	
	£212	14	

* That is, as actor and manager.

Brought up	-	£212	14	Brought up -	£245 14
Mr. Sedgwick	- -	6	0	Mr. Grimaldi - -	4 0
Powell	- -	6	0	Packer - - -	3 0
Holland	- - -	5	0	Decamp - - -	3 0
Caulfield	- -	4	0	Twenty-five Gentlemen of great or respectable talents, received weekly a total of	£255 14
Powell (Prompter)		4	0		
Dignum	- -	4	0		
Cooke	- - -	4	0		
		£245	14		

As to the Ladies,

Mrs. Jordan averaged about	- - -	£31	10	Brought up -	£102 10
(During the season of 1804–5 I find she received £1081 10*s.*,				Mrs. Powell - -	10 0
Mrs. Crouch that year Reduced the next to £7.		14	0	Ansell - - -	5 0
Miss Decamp	- -	12	0	Miss Mellon -	5 0
Mrs. Mountain	- -	12	0	Tyrer - - -	5 0
Bland	- - -	12	0	Mrs. Harlow - -	4 0
Pope	- - -	11	0	Miss B. Menage -	3 0
Young (*ci-devant* Miss Biggs)	-	10	0	Hicks - - -	3 0
				Campbell - -	3 0
		£102	10	Mrs. Sparks - -	3 0
				Henry - - -	3 0
				Sontley - - -	3 0
				Campbell (2d) -	3 0
				Byrne (dancer)	5 0
				20 Female performers	£157 10

All the salaries below £3. per week I purposely omit, that I may not seem to discredit the names of very deserving people.

When Mr. Kemble quitted Drury Lane Theatre, it was decidedly with a view to the purchase of one-sixth of the property of the rival house. The intermediate person was Mrs. Inchbald, who conducted to its close the negociation between Mr.

Harris and himself. Mr. Kemble was not a wealthy man; but he could be at no loss for aid in making the purchase; Mr. Heathcote was anxious to supply what was required on the occasion. In so total a change of interest, the shifting of his scene of action was judged a matter calling for some interval of preparation. He therefore seized the opportunity of revisiting the continent in the company of his very dear friend, Mr. R. Heathcote; and ever "bearing a wary eye" to what might contribute to the perfection of the English stage, he determined not only to inspect the improvements of our polite neighbours, but to visit the Spanish theatre, which in the cast of its drama bore a closer affinity to our own.

The reader shall, however, have the satisfaction of reading Mr. Kemble's own account of the principal features of his tour; and, if I mistake not, the great actor will become endeared to him from the unaffected excellence of the man. The first letter which I shall communicate, was written from Paris to his brother Charles; it is extremely characteristic of his feeling and sincerity.

"*Paris, July 23*, 1802.

"My dear Charles,

"How does my mother do? Is she in the country, or does she prefer staying in town? Tell me every thing about her health, and give my duty to her and to my father.

"After a circuit, Lille, Douai, and Arras, I arrived here safe and sound a few days ago. You know, perhaps, that we were detained a whole week at Lord Guilford's, who was inexpressibly kind to us, by poor Heathcote's illness. Every thing in Douai is in a state of ruin, poverty, and desolation not to be described. I had not the heart to go up to my old room. The neighbours, with whom I talked, have a notion that the English are coming back, and are overjoyed when they tell you so.

"This place (Paris) is such a scene of magnificence, filth, pleasure, poverty, gaiety, distress, virtue and vice, as constitutes a greater miracle than was ever chronicled in history. The plays I have seen are, Iphigenie en Aulide, by Racine; Oreste, by Voltaire; La Mere Coupable, by Beaumarchais; and a farce or two. I will not pretend to say anything of the actors or the theatres, till I have seen a little more of them. Talma and I are grown very well acquainted; he seems an agreeable man. Last night I was presented to Contat, who is not what she was. I know Michot, Fleury, Dazincourt, Baptiste, and one or two more of the Comedie Française, a little. I should have told you, that I have seen l'Abbé de l'Epée. Monvel acts the Abbé as well as possible; the other characters were very much inferior to the English. There cannot be a more kind reception than I meet with here. My Lord Egremont, Lord and Lady Holland, who live most splendidly, insist on our dining

with them every day, and with one or the other we do dine every day, and then you know comes the spectacle.

"I have promised Talma to procure a copy of Pizarro, that he may see whether it can be adapted to the French stage. Buy a book of it, make it up in separate packets, and send it me by the next post. I am afraid they will not be able to turn it to any use. Texier told me he would give me a letter or two to some persons of his acquaintance here, who he thought might be useful and pleasant to a stranger. Pray upbraid him with having forgot me. He may send them still, if he pleases. God bless you, my boy! Don't forget to tell me how you do, and be sure to remember all the news. You are to direct to me, Hôtel de Courland, Place de la Concorde, Paris. Remember me to every body I ought to remember.

"Yours, J. P. KEMBLE."

When we came afterwards to talk over the French theatre together, he frankly confessed that their mode of acting tragedy did not please him. There can be little doubt, that much of the former grand style had disappeared, like all other greatness, in the progress of their revolution. La Clairon, late in life, wrote her complaint of the vulgarity of action and the carelessness of pronunciation, on the modern stage. She had lived to hear the quantity of the verse sadly misconceived, from the de-

ficiency of grammatical studies; and the measured beauty of diction sacrificed to those fiery bursts of passion, which bore no proportion whatever to the actual sentiment of the poet.

Mr. Kemble was indeed received warmly in Paris. But my friend was a genuine Englishman, and little likely to answer that demand of *display*, that is so natural to a Frenchman. The Parisians accordingly wondered at his silence — he appeared to them thoughtful and reserved; but they admired the grace of his manners, and were charmed with the courtesy which so brightened the expression of a countenance essentially tragic. Among other complimentary things, the Parisians thought Mr. Kemble wonderfully like the grand Bonaparte in countenance; the representative of the greatest of the Romans had an opportunity of remarking the restless action of Napoleon, and by no means saw, or endeavoured to persuade himself that he perceived, any external indications of that powerful character, which predominated over all the sanguinary factions of France. He told me that one of Napoleon's hats was presented to him, that he might judge of the comparative capacity of their heads; but this is, indeed, high matter, and as it would be impossible to exhaust the subject in any given number of volumes, it shall occupy no greater space in the present.

It had often formed a topic of our conversation, that when Mr. Kemble got to Madrid, he would

enquire what could now be told of a prodigy of whom Mr. Cumberland speaks in his life. That agreeable writer describes an actress, called La Tyranna, of whose caprice he gives many instances, and one of them, as may be imagined, flattering to himself. She let him know when she fancied herself "in the vein" to exhibit her full tragic power, and literally overwhelmed him with astonishment at the dreadful energies she possessed; and then complacently enjoyed the wonder and the sympathy she had raised. Considerable time, however, had now elapsed, and Mr. Kemble could hear nothing from the actors of Madrid of this *terrible* ornament of their profession; but he was himself *almost* as fortunate as Mr. Cumberland had been; as will be seen by the following extract from one of his letters, which, however, I shall not confine to that subject, but allow the reader all that is not of a private nature in the communication.

"After wishing you many, many new years, "each happier than that which went before it, I will "give you the satisfaction of knowing, that I am "safe and well here, after only two overturns on the "way. I believe you know all the places I have seen "a great deal better than I do; yet of Madrid I "will tell you, that it is a village to any one who "has lived in London.—A town that you may easily "walk round in an hour and a half, and whose po-"pulation does not probably exceed a hundred and

" fifty thousand souls, does not convey a very lofty " idea of the metropolis of a great monarchy. Seen " from some points, however, this village, as I have " ventured to call it, is beautiful, and even magni- " ficent. The old spires and towers of the con- " vents and churches, the gay fronts of the public " buildings, and the extensive mansions of the " nobility, give it at once an air of gaiety and gran- " deur. I speak only of four or five particular " streets; for the rest of them, in general, are too " narrow for carriages to pass each other without " danger; and they are latterly grown so dirty, " that I wonder, considering the intolerable heat of " their summers, that the plague is not as common " here as at Constantinople.

" There are here two theatres. Senor Mayques, " who manages that called *Los Canos del Peral*, " has been in France; he is an intelligent actor, " and certainly the best in the company. In this " theatre they principally act translations of French " comedies and vaudevilles. In the other, that " called *de la Cruz*, an actress, who is styled La " Senora Rita Luna, by her sole and superior " merit sustains the fame of the old and celebrated " authors of Spain. The discernment and natural " good taste of this lady show to her with exact- " ness the idea of the character she has to re- " present. Her countenance, from the amazing " flexibility of her features, displays every thing " that passes in her mind. The action of ordinary

" performers fails simply because they know not " how to dispose of their lifeless frames: that of " la Rita Luna adds the most speaking graces to a " voice so musical, that, in Spanish expression, her " mouth might be styled the shell of Apollo. In a " word, I have only seen one actress to whom I " think la Rita Luna inferior in the art. Highly " distinguished as she is by Melpomene, la Rita " Luna is yet more decidedly a favourite of Thalia; " and she told me herself, that she never, with " perfect goodwill, set herself about any tragic " studies. But it is difficult to conceive how that " can be done reluctantly, which is so trans- " cendant. *

" You know what bustle they keep in England " about the pride, pomp, and circumstance of a " Spanish bull-fight; by the best good luck in the " world there has been one since I came to Madrid; " it is exactly like all the rest of the exaggerated " descriptions of too many travellers. I do assure " you, that it is so far from being a splendid or in- " teresting spectacle, that if I lived in Spain for " the rest of my life, I hardly believe I should " have the least desire to see another.

" The King and Queen are expected to return " to Aranjuez in the course of next week, when " the greatest part of the immense train of the no-

* The passage relative to the theatres, Mr. Kemble wrote in the Spanish language, which he was learning diligently at the time. He read the authors currently before he left England.

" bility, who have attended their Majesties in their " tour, will, it is supposed, be very well contented " to come back to their own houses, and restore " some spirit to Madrid, which, they say here, is " very dull for want of them. If they would bring " some *fire*, as well as spirit, with them, I should " be among the foremost to bid them welcome. " Will you believe it? I am in what is called a " very good lodging, and am at this present writ- " ing hereof absolutely freezing. What do you " think of the month of January, and colder than " it is in London, joined with a great square bare " white-washed room, and not a possibility of hav- " ing a morsel of fire? There is hardly such a " thing as a chimney in Madrid, and the pans of " charcoal, over which the Spaniards crouch and " coddle themselves, turn me so sick in ten mi- " nutes, that I dare not go near them. There is " no such thing as a window-shutter, that closes " within half a foot — and the frames gape so wide " from all the doors, that you may almost walk " into any apartment, without the trouble of open- " ing them.

" Well, never mind all this. I like the Spaniards " very much, and shall be glad, as long as I live, " that I have seen them. The French have ma- " naged matters so as to be a good deal unpopular " in Spain: the English, on the contrary, are in " high favour; and would be received everywhere " on a footing more easy and familiar even than

" they already are, were it not that the Spanish " gentry are a little out of humour, and, indeed, I " must say, not unreasonably, with some of our " countrymen, who, after having been most hos- " pitably admitted to their tables, parties, &c. " have acted more like spies than liberal travellers, " by ridiculing, in their publications, those man- " ners and customs for the knowledge of which " they were beholden to that GENEROSITY, which " ought to have made its errors *sacred* from their " MOCKERY."

Such is the close of my admirable friend's letter. Such was the high and gentlemanly feeling of his mind, and his practice through life was in the most strict and rigorous conformity. In the unthinking levity of youth, how prone are we all to show our folly in our criticism, and to mock at customs of which we know not the origin, and manners that may differ even for the better from our own. We have of late been excited to a perfect storm of indignation by the writings of sundry foreigners, who have published their observations upon our national and social manners. It were unjust to infer more malignity in the travellers of other countries than in our own: equal mistake may be candidly allowed; and the necessity of longer observation and deeper knowledge may at last silence the cravings of the press itself, and limit our foreign travels to what is CERTAINLY TRUE, and also PROPER TO BE TOLD.

I have thus exhibited Mr. Kemble as an amiable and intelligent traveller, and I hope demonstrated the soundness of his personal character. While he was in Madrid, his brother Charles had the melancholy task of informing him of their father's death. I have before mentioned his dutiful and cordial manners to his parents, and I have little doubt that the following touching expression of his feelings under the loss he had sustained will be thought by most readers the brightest page of his life. When his brother Charles read over to me the various letters in his possession, that I might select such as I should think of *public* interest, I did not find one in the whole collection in which a wise, a moral public, had a deeper interest than in this natural record of the good man's sorrows.

" *Madrid, December* 31, 1802.

" My dearest friend,

" How sincerely I always loved my father, and respected his sound understanding, you know too well for it to be necessary that I should even mention what I feel this moment on opening your letter. God Almighty receive him into his everlasting happiness! and teach me to be resigned, and resolute to deserve to follow him, when my appointed hour is come. My poor mother, though I know she will exert becoming firmness of mind in this and every passage of her life, cannot but feel a melancholy void in losing the companion of her

youth, the associate of her advancing years, and the father of her children. I regret from the very bottom of my heart, that I cannot with the most dutiful affection assure her at her feet, that what a grateful son can offer and do shall never be wanting from me, to promote her content, and ease and happiness. How in vain have I delighted myself in thousands of inconvenient occurrences on this journey, with the thought of contemplating my father's cautious incredulity while I related them to him! Millions of things uninteresting, may be, to any body else, I had treasured up for his surprise and scrutiny! It is God's pleasure that he is gone from us—once more, the peace of the just be with him! The resignation I had long observed in him to the will of Heaven, and his habitual piety, are no small consolation to me; yet I cannot help feeling a dejected swelling at my heart, that keeps me in a flood of tears for him in spite of all I can do to stop 'em. Again, God bless him! This is Friday,—there is no post to the North till Tuesday morning.—In a few hours I don't doubt my being better able to write."

"*January* 1st.

"THIS day ought to begin with congratulations and good wishes to my mother and you, and I beg you both to accept them from me. You see Michael Sharpe sometimes, I suppose. Pray desire him to take care of my father's picture for

me — it is like him, though not quite what I could wish — at least, I used to think so. It is precious now, however. Perhaps my mother would choose to have it; if she would, let it be framed for me as it ought to be, and hung up in her drawing room. The letters I write my wife I consider as letters to you all; you hear from time to time, as she receives them, what I do, what I see, and that I am well. I can't imagine a more amiable friend and companion to anybody under affliction than my wife—she is affectionate at once, and cheerful, and I know how particularly she would stifle her own feelings, and exert herself, to be a consolation to my mother. You must have had much to undergo, Charles; much of grief and much of trouble —I wish I had been at home to partake them with you, and be some ease to you. Nothing, in my opinion, could be better judged than your interring my poor father without the least affectation of any parade; and I agree with you entirely that his remains should be protected by a simple stone; but I beg that in the plain memorial inscribed on it, his AGE may be mentioned. Long life implies virtuous habits, and they are real honours.

"I thank you for the news you send me, though you don't find me at this moment in a disposition to think much about the THEATRE. As far as regards your own particular in it, you have nothing now to do but to act your best, let your part be what it will, for your own progress in your art; —

to do whatever is within your power for your employers, out of common honesty.

"I need not ask you to find the strongest and the tenderest terms to offer my duty to my mother in. Sid, Sally, Cicely, Harry, all have my love. I write to my wife by this post. I have only received a letter from Charles Moore (of Nov. 21st), by the mail that brought me your sad account of December 14th. I will write to him very soon, tell him. Adieu, my dear Charles.

"Ever your affectionate brother,

"J. P. KEMBLE."

It would be very like insult to offer any thing in the way of comment upon such a letter as the foregoing. But I will risk the imputation even of officious criticism, to notice the beautiful reason assigned by Mr. Kemble for inscribing his father's age upon the stone which was to cover him, namely, that "long life implied virtuous habits," and that those, without any kind of dispute, were "real "honours." It is difficult to select a more pregnant and convincing truth, conveyed in happier terms.

Mr. Kemble returned from this excursion greatly improved in health, and full of respect for the Spanish character. He spoke the language of the country very agreeably when we visited our friend Mr. Mitchel together, who is even an excellent critic in that noble and copious tongue.

Before I introduce Mr. Kemble upon the new stage of his professional life, every consideration of respect and propriety calls upon me for particular reference to the stage-manager, whom Mr. Kemble was now to succeed. I shall take the opportunity to notice cursorily the duties of that station. — I shall look a little at the composition of the Covent Garden company, and endeavour to display its feelings upon the expected change; and then accurately exhibit the property into which Mr. Kemble was now admitted. The succeeding chapter will then delineate his first season, and display the full strength of the new arrangements.

The late Mr. William Lewis was better known to the public as an actor than as a manager. On the stage, he was always the most vivacious, and at times the most elegant comic actor of his day. As the stage manager, his duties were the almost daily attendance upon rehearsals; and that often uncomfortable intervention between the manager, Mr. Harris, and his authors or his actors. The energy of Mr. Harris, though he was usually at a distance, was constantly felt. Mr. Lewis gave immediate effect to his decisions. The monarch reserved, for the most part, matters of grace and favour to himself, and they were usually granted in person on his coming to town. His deputy had always to announce his displeasure, and to carry through the discipline of the stage. There was a kindness, a pleasantry about his manner,

which almost reconciled an offender to his sentence. He knew exactly how to use the dreaded name of "*Demogorgon*," and got through the business with the feeling of a friend and the spirit of a gentleman. One part of the duty of a stage-manager is to cast and arrange the plays which are brought out. This, in course, requires a just estimate of the talents and steadiness of the company; and, in some instances, much address, to overbear the false estimate that human vanity is for ever making of its own merits. In new plays, to be sure, the stage manager may be supposed to get the assistance of their authors. But it is only the veteran bard, who can be of the least use on such occasions. There are so many points on which his manuscript affords no instruction, that a young writer is cruelly startled when he is asked, in a particular scene, "*how many* attendants he will have on?" Or, "what parts of the stage" his characters are to occupy? The same unforeseen puzzle falls upon him, when he is desired "to move" his performers during the dialogue, so as that their positions at last may be convenient for the *exit*. In the getting up of old plays, or such as have lain aside even for a few years, the first question asked upon a stage is, "How is the *business* done; who knows it?" The acting manager should, therefore, be a person of long experience, and have served himself under able generals. The drill is the principle of order — If you seldom rehearse, your acting will be intolerable. Where a

part is written out with the mere accompaniment of the cues, a perception must be very quick indeed to be reasonably sure of the meaning. Questions, therefore, continually occur, *how* such a passage should be spoken? Your acting manager should be as ready in his reply, as the bow or courtesy is which always follows the information. Again, in well regulated theatres, the pronunciation should be uniform. If he should chance to catch, during the rehearsal, a little barn-door syllable or false accent, he will take the proper opportunity, *aside*, to refine the utterance, with neither tart derision nor growling severity. As to the cadence of the speakers, it is almost impossible to meddle with it — perhaps the performer may be allowed his own tune, provided he sings it agreeably. About *emphasis* the manager may be as learned as he will.

Now, Mr. Lewis, though an Englishman by birth, had acted so long in Irish theatres, that he pronounced like the cultivated Irishman. In Mercutio, for instance, he used to exclaim "a Jewelist, "a Jewelist!" and other preferences he had, of a similar quality, many of which disfigure the pages of Sheridan's dictionary. The old gentleman used to justify his singularity by the authority of Swift, the friend of his father. But Swift, without a reference to the doubtful question about his birth, affected to speak as an Irishman, and half his verbal wit will be no joke at all, if read in the English manner. Qualified, however, amply by temper, man-

ners, and judgment, for a manager, Mr. Lewis had sustained the toils of rehearsal in the morning, with the additional labours of his own study and performance as an actor always before the town, for a period of TWENTY years, and standing as high at the theatre with his brethren, as he did with the patentee. He kept himself in unfailing health and spirits, by a daily walk between rehearsal and dinner up to Hyde Park and back again. For many years together, he was as noticeable to the full in this range as the Duke of Queensberry; and it was obvious that his gaiety was not a forced plant of the hot-house — it flourished, like his slender switch, in the open air. Pleasant, sensible, worthy Lewis, many a whimsical story have I heard from you in this your beaten track! In talking of old actors, he would sometimes utter heresies. But O'Brien, in comedy, was his idol. Woodward he considered positively vulgar, and Garrick himself hardly genteel.

Mr. Lewis, from his long connexion with Mr. Harris, was permitted to purchase one-sixth part of the Covent Garden property, for which he paid twenty-three thousand pounds; and in doing this he then conceived himself to have secured a desirable and permanent provision for his family. I have been told, that Mrs. Lewis never could feel happy in this purchase, and that it was finally at her entreaty it was given up. Admirable Sir Fretful! "Upon my soul, the women are the best judges

"after all." It might probably occur to her, that in addition to the public fickleness, PROPERTY is a frightful test of friendship; and she might tremble at the possibility, however slight, of any ground of difference between her husband and Mr. Harris, in whom besides, for his life, the absolute management of the concern was vested.

I had once intended to pass over in profound silence a mutiny in the concern, which had produced very important, if not ruinous results, but for the invincible firmness of Mr. Harris. The following gentlemen figured on this occasion, during the year 1800, as the GLORIOUS EIGHT, who had undertaken the redress of all wrongs, and definitively to raise the profession from what they imagined a degrading servitude to the consequence of their rank as gentlemen and artists: — Messrs. Holman, Pope, Munden, Fawcett, John Johnstone, H. Johnston, Incledon, and T. Knight, who had first thrown down the apple of discord in Covent Garden.*

The whole dispute was referred at last to my Lord Salisbury, then Lord High Chamberlain, and determining most decidedly in the main for the manager, he regulated that performers should have

* As the reader may feel a wish to know the *personal* result as to the performers, I have to remark that Mr. Holman was the sacrifice on this occasion. The other *seven* wandering stars were soon happily reinstated in their spheres, and became quite obedient to the cloud-compelling Jupiter.

three weeks' previous notice of the nights fixed for their respective benefits. The dread of similar disturbances produced its natural effect upon the mind of Lewis. He knew that a house so divided could not long flourish; he felt also the certainty, that theatrical property, *communibus annis*, gave miserable interest for money. Foresight once alarmed, quickened into the perception, that the house itself was getting old; and that a new theatre could only be built by a further advance of capital, or entailing a burthen of new renters upon the concern. He, therefore, after holding the property only a single year, at his own request, relinquished the purchase; and the stronger ambition of Mr. Kemble subsequently led him to acquire that sixth of the concern at the former price of twenty-three thousand pounds.

A few considerations here offer themselves to the mind as to the union of persons so long opposed to each other, and the introduction of a man into the concern, who must cease to be himself if he concurred in the usual system of the Covent Garden management. The whole mind of Mr. Kemble was bent upon rendering his present house the palace of Shakspeare; all that he had done, at the other theatre, towards a more perfect representation of his plays, was to be now therefore transferred to one devoted to a different scale of expense, and a less ambitious principle of management. In point of consequence and character, Mr. Kemble's system

was great and captivating. He withdrew from Drury Lane its former classical feature, stamped originally by Garrick, and perpetuated by the great talents of his sister, and his own. The policy of Mr. Harris was cautious; and he might conceive himself obtaining on this occasion all that he wanted on the one hand, while, as to the rest of the arrangements, the absolute power of the management gave him full opportunity to indulge the town with novelties; which, however slighted by his partner, he had found in a commercial view highly profitable, and not too expensive. As to his avowed passion, therefore, Mr. Kemble was greatly indulged, but he did not entirely govern. Still, as may be supposed, considerable alarm was felt, by the old friends of the concern, at the coming in of a gentleman so inflexible in his taste; and the performers of the company had no few apprehensions that the future business of the stage might be more troublesome than the past had been, from the great zeal and critical accuracy of the new manager.

The estimated value of Covent Garden Theatre, patent, house, wardrobe, scenery, machinery, and every description of stage properties, at the time Mr. Kemble came into the concern, was £138,000. The proprietors and their respective shares stand thus upon the deed, and I use the terms of that instrument to convey an exact knowledge of the distribution.

Thos. Harris	was possessed of six undivided twelfth parts, being equal to a moiety - - -	12–24ths.
John P. Kemble	of two undivided twelfth parts, being equal to one-sixth part -	4–24ths.
George White	of one undivided twelfth part, and one moiety or half part of another undivided twelfth part being together equal to one-eighth part thereof - - - -	3–24ths.
A. Martindale	the same as Geo. White	3–24ths
Henry Harris	of the remaining or other undivided twelfth part of, and in the said Theatre Royal - -	2–24ths.
		24 Total.

Upon a comparison with that loveliest of all theatres, the Apollo Drury, the interior of Covent Garden was always considered heavy. It was therefore determined to lighten the general effect. The frontispiece of the theatre was raised ten feet. The slips, instead of carrying the rudeness of the gallery all round the house, were now converted into boxes. The fronts of the boxes were painted chastely dead white and gold, and their insides party-coloured green, with suitable ornaments. To show, too, what were the expectations from the fashionable world, on thus transferring the seat of tragedy, sixteen private boxes were built, and let at £300 a year each, and among their proprietors were found the Duchesses of Northumberland

and Devonshire, the Marchioness of Abercorn, the Earl of Egremont, Lady Holland, Lady Milner, Mrs. Vaughan, Mrs. Morton Pitt, &c. &c., the declared patrons and admirers of the Kemble family. A connexion was thus fixed to the house, at least as splendid as the talents by which it was attracted. The higher orders being accommodated, the gentry had an additional seat given to the boxes in their two tiers, and the note of preparation sounded strongly through all the departments. The royal arms in the centre of the drop curtain had been used in the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre during the days of Cibber, Wilkes, and Booth, and they seemed triumphantly to announce the return of theatric glory.

CHAP. III.

THE AUTHOR'S EXPLANATION. — NOTICE OF THE CHANGE IN THE COVENT GARDEN MANAGEMENT. — FEELINGS OF THE COMIC WRITERS. — DINNER GIVEN BY MR. KEMBLE. HIS FIRST APPEARANCE AT COVENT GARDEN. — REVIVALS. — PIZARRO TRANSFERRED. — RAISING THE WIND. — THE CARAVAN. — THE DOG. — ENGLISH FLEET. — ELLISTON AND HIS BENEFIT. — HIS COPIOUS ADDRESS. — MISS DUNCAN. — BLIND BARGAIN. — KEMBLE'S KINDNESS TO ITS AUTHOR. — TOBIN. — PECULIAR FATE OF MR. KEMBLE. — MASTER BETTY. — SKETCH OF HIM. — HOUGH. — BELFAST. — EDINBURGH AND MR. JACKSON. — HOME, THE AUTHOR OF DOUGLAS. — MACREADY. — ROSCIUS IN TOWN. — IMMENSE CROWD. — HOW HE APPEARED. — CRITICALLY EXAMINED. — HIS HOUSES THE FIRST SEASON. — DECLINE OF HIS INFLUENCE. — MANIA CURED, AND HOW.

I HAVE now arrived at the opening of the winter season of 1803–4, and having thus brought the *particular* notice of the drama, with its authors and actors, down to a period within almost *general* recollection, the limits of my work may allowably restrict me to the leading events of the stage and the personal history of Mr. Kemble. I say the limits of my work, because I by no means feel, or affect to feel, any apprehension, where it may be neces-

sary to treat of existing merits. It is surely possible, even in criticism, to catch that tone of urbanity, which qualifies rebuke by the obvious conviction, that the writer can have no *spleen* to gratify. Difference of opinion may be expected in the fluctuations of taste; but a smile of superior genius will easily dispose of inveterate prejudice in the critic, who cannot help his birth in another century, and may, perhaps, pride himself upon being taught in a different school.

The change of the stage management was very properly noticed from the stage by Fawcett, who spoke and sang an occasional address, composed on the spur of the moment, probably by Dibdin. Its object was to let Mr. Lewis down comfortably from his command to that private station in the company, which, as he filled it, was distinction enough for any man. The feeling of this address, whoever wrote it, partook more of affection to the old course than triumph in the new.

" In fame's gazette, perhaps our mimic band
Has advertis'd some change in its command;
Has told you, here a *fav'rite chief* you'll find,
Vice another favourite resign'd:
And our *new* captain we salute with pride,
Since by your judgment he's approv'd as tried.
Yet inclination, duty, each impel
To speak of him who lately rul'd so well;
Who though he quit a truncheon for the ranks,
His mirthful efforts still shall ask your thanks;
And hold while flatter'd here with approbation
His post of honour in a private station."

The writer then goes on to enumerate the coming claims of *comedy* and *opera* — and the accession of the two greatest tragedians in the world is hinted only in the phrase that, in laughter's *interval*, at times the audience will hear

"Melpomene *petition* for a tear."

Surely the situation of Leontes is here evinced among the company —

"I have *tremor cordis* on me — my heart dances;
But not for joy — not joy." WINTER'S TALE.

Melpomene too was in no very mendicant condition, maintaining, as she did, *five* members of the Kemble family in her suite at this theatre — Mr. Kemble himself, Mr. Charles Kemble, Mr. H. Siddons, Mrs. Siddons, and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. H. Siddons.

The comic writers for that theatre were by no means *pleasant* under the change; they had found the field open long, and were alarmed at any invasion. Mr. Harris said what he could to still their apprehensions, but they bore their dismay in legible characters about with them. One of Thalia's chief supporters, upon this *serious* advent, was advised "to fall in gratitude to his knees, that Heaven had "blessed him with only *two* children." He did the only proper thing on the occasion — he imparted the advice received to Mr. Kemble himself, who told me of it, almost suffocated with *laughter*.

In England every thing is settled by a dinner, and the new allies invited Sheridan to witness their mutual felicity. When the wine had circulated freely, the proprietors of Covent Garden began to express their sentiments in a vein of the greatest cordiality — upon which Sheridan, with very bitter pleasantry, reproached them with their facility or their hypocrisy. — "Two fellows," said he, "that have "absolutely hated each other deadly all their lives," — "*False*," said Mr. Harris, (very whimsically,) "we have not hated each other these *six* weeks — "have we, Kemble?"

The truth is, that there is nothing in liberal competition, for either fame or fortune, that should unfit men for union. Cicero has long since told us, that the most effectual cement is the familiarization to each other of minds marked by their integrity.—"Sed omnium societatum nulla præstan- "tior est, nulla firmior, quam cum VIRI BONI moribus "similes familiaritate conjuncti sunt."—*De Officiis*, lib. i.

Before Mr. Kemble entered upon his allotted management, he entertained the leading actors of Covent Garden at his house, in Great Russel Street, and his great rival, Cooke, attended the invitation, as it appeared to me, with very sincere pleasure. Mr. Const, Mr. Reynolds, and myself, were invited, although we had never trod the boards, and a very peculiar and not unentertaining day we had of it. Before dinner was served up, I fell into conversa-

tion with Cooke in the library, and if I had not acquired too decisive evidences of his indiscretion to doubt the charges against him, from anything done or said by him on that day, I should never have suspected his firmness, but have left him thoroughly a convert to his well-informed mind and gentlemanly manners.

I shall by no means remove the veil, which in decent life should always be thrown between the convivial and the calm observer. One pleasantry we had, late of course in the sittings, which burst from the prolific fancy of H. Johnston. He chose to imagine, in the Christmas preparation of a Pantomime, the sudden and alarming indisposition of the *Harlequin;* and he made Mr. Harris himself announce the event to the company, and call upon their zeal for the property, to show with what success they could supply the place of that knight of the wooden sword. The course he prescribed to himself for each person was a remonstrance in their *tone* of voice — their perfect *action* in rising to make the attempt, in the circular run, in the rolling of the head, and the usual attitudes; concluding with a leap at the door, to imitate the agile escape of that hero. He spared neither the absent nor the *present* members of the fraternity, and no man in the room more enjoyed the harlequin of Mr. Cooke, than he did *himself.*

Mr. Johnston, however, was then no longer a member of the Covent Garden company, having

concluded an engagement at the other theatre; and Mr. Charles Kemble filled his line of business under the new management. Incledon obliged us with some of his finest airs, given with a power of tone, and a pathos, that I never, before or since, have heard so astonishingly combined. The vibration he excited in the room, (an extremely fine one,) seemed absolutely to threaten every thing vitreous around him. I retired not among the *latest* of the guests, in the fear that something might occur to break in upon recollections so agreeable.

It was on the 24th of September 1803, that Mr. Kemble made his first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre in his favourite Hamlet, which part, precisely TWENTY years before, had introduced him to a London audience, at the rival house. The applause was extreme upon his entrance, and his new friend, Mr. Harris, paid him the compliment of attending his performance.

Mrs. Siddons, with similar policy, kept to her original charm, and acted Isabella on the 27th. She excited and justified the highest admiration.

The new manager had made an arrangement with Mr. Cooke, calculated to conciliate their rival claims, in consequence of which, on the 3d of October, to Mr. Cooke's Richard Mr. Kemble performed the Earl of Richmond. On the 5th Mr. Kemble acted one of his most admired parts in comedy, Lord Townley, and Miss Louisa Brunton, a younger sister of Mrs. Merry, made her debût in

his Lady, and gave the promise of a very elegant, if not a great and original, votress of the comic muse. This play was perfectly acted in all its parts. The John Moody of Emery was what Lear calls the "*thing itself*;" look, action, tone, dialect, feeling, all true, and all Yorkshire.

The beautiful tragedy of Douglas followed, on the 6th, in which Mr. Kemble now acted the *Stranger*, and H. Siddons his adopted son. The printing of Sheridan's *Pizarro* laid it open, of course, to every stage, and Mr. Kemble got it up at his present theatre with great splendor. In nearly all its essentials the play, though it had changed its scene, retained its original performers; with the exception now of Murray and his daughter, in Ataliba and Cora. Cooke, it was supposed, would be very *powerful* in Pizarro. I think Sir Wilful Witwood, in the third degree of *drink*, is also said to be "powerful." Upon his entrance it was soon apparent, that he knew nothing that he *did*, and the audience could understand nothing that he *said*. He fell back overpowered, before the conclusion of the first act, and, in the opinion of the spectators, was dead drunk. Mr. Kemble came on, and assured the house that "Mr. Cooke was *really* unwell, and unable to proceed;" of which, in truth, there could not be the smallest doubt; and Mr. Siddons even distinguished himself in reading the character. Three days afterwards, Cooke was allowed very indulgently to perform Pizarro; I

believe without the dramatic certificate of any physician — a document at all times of infinite value for its *accuracy*.

One of Mr. Kemble's favourite afterpieces was Arthur and Emmeline, so finely acted formerly by himself and Miss Farren. Their present representatives were Charles Kemble and Mrs. H. Siddons. It was still delightful.

The 5th of November presented the first dramatic production of James Kenney, in the farce called *Raising the Wind*. The needy adventurer, Jeremy Diddler, who has lost every thing but his spirits, and makes *them* carry him through every thing, in the hands of Lewis was a source of exquisite diversion. Often as I bring that delightful actor before me, and renew *faintly* (which Mr. JONES does *not* do) the astonishing varieties of his hilarity, I repeatedly see his accomplished deportment covering the unfortunate *rents* in his only coat, and borrowing such a *thing* as two and ten-pence, or some such odd and broken sum of money. As Mr. Reynolds, on the 12th, chose to transfer his *three per cents.* from the stock of the Governor and Company of Covent Garden, I have nothing to say. In my opinion, the *interest* was as good as he could procure in any other fund; and if he had waited but a single day, there would have been a great demand in the market, and a consequent *rise* of "3 per cents." But he had latterly been amusing himself with water-works; and imagined that the

actual element, flowing between canvas rocks and painted herbage, overshaded by immoveable foliage, would be a vast improvement in our stage; and that a *real* dog would make a *real* splash in a trough containing *real* water. All this he put in proof on the 5th of December in his serio-comic romance called "The Caravan," at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. No man ever took better measure of the public mind than Reynolds.

There was a little scandal in the theatre, on the subject of this dog. The brave fellow, who plunged into the stream, and actually saved the child, was a native of Newfoundland, and named Carlo. Now it was said, that the animal who "smelt the lamps" was actually a mastiff, in the service of the stage manager, Bannister himself. It was reported, too, that, when presenting himself to the house, he dressed himself up in clothes of the same colour and cut as those worn by the diver, even to the *hair* and the *queue*, and stood impudently before the spectators with all the swagger of having performed the achievement. So, gentle reader, in our pantomimes, there is one ground Harlequin, who does the *motions*, and another who takes the *leap*.

This afterpiece was extremely popular, brought very good latter accounts, and was followed by another, *Cinderella;* which, combined with the Soldier's Daughter, a very successful comedy, by Cherry, saved Drury Lane from the ruin, that might reasonably have been apprehended, the strength con-

sidered which had been attached to the rival theatre. So that Bannister, as he well might, took some credit to his management, when returning thanks at the close of the season. They had, in fact, received at the doors, in their 200 nights, the sum of 49,427*l.* 1*s.*, which gave an average of 242*l.* 2*s.* 8*d.* per night.

The other house, during the season, brought forward a most successful opera, The English Fleet in 1342, by the dexterous and indefatigable Dibdin; and Braham, Incledon, and Storace, without any great difficulty, rendered it triumphant.

As to the *division* of the management exclusively Mr. Kemble's, he had planted in his new garden some of those hardy children of *nature*, that must ever flourish, with proper attention to them, and returned thanks himself to the public, in fact for crediting *themselves* by attending the finest representations in the world of our sterling drama.

The summer season produced little noticeable, except the beginning *address* of that extraordinary man Mr. Elliston. On the 10th of September he solicited the public to countenance a *benefit* at the Opera House — the little theatre being too small either for his attraction or his hopes. He announced Pizarro, with Love Laughs at Locksmiths, and it was one o'clock in the morning before the doors of the theatre could be secured. Any temporary *in-*

vasion of this region of fashion has always been precious to the visitors of our common theatres; they consider it in short as a *cheap* luxury — they enter the almost forbidden circle of the higher orders, and imagine raptures in the experiment "that they never know."

But as the half-guineas at a pit door of the opera are rather deliberately laid down, and no money can ever be taken in its season at the box door, the architect of the house never planned any securities, to keep the people from entering too rapidly. They in truth *dropt* rather than *rusht* in. On the present occasion, a multitude assembled at the doors, before whose pressure they ere long gave way, and all the petty impediments of the Italian gentry were swept aside: some paid their money and got no *cheques*; others threw down bank notes and took no *change* — many were carried in by a torrent, that was too rapid even for the operations of the plunderer.

Our inimitable friend came forward to notice that the *terms of admission* had in very many cases not been *complied with*. "Good phrases," says Bardolph, "surely are, and ever were, very com-"mendable." His appeal to the *honour* of the audience was most liberally answered on their parts. Some of his friends, with *pewter plates* in their hands, collected through the pit; and the most assiduous churchwardens never heard the offerings of *charity* clatter more cheerfully. The honour of our hero

was pledged to supply change for the *notes* that had been taken; and in spite of accidents, he was said to have received, at least, 600*l.* that evening.'

After *bleeding*, quiet usually is restored to the agitated frame: but no sooner was the curtain up, than the stage was found almost covered with people standing ten rows deep. A violent storm once more arose among the visitors in the body of the house, who figured to themselves what a business Pizarro would make of it, with at least three hundred *English* in the Peruvian army. But Elliston turned a nuisance into *perfume* by a second address, as to "the necessity of accommodating those "who had done him an honour, the remembrance "of which would never be eradicated from his "heart." He added—"I humbly trust, therefore, "that to a *Briton* you will not deny that favour, "which your *spontaneous goodness* formerly granted "to a *Foreigner*."

The plea of course was irresistible; not that the present audience knew one tittle of the case that was cited for their emulation; which, in fact, was an opera benefit for Madame Banti; when, in truth, it little signified who were on or off the stage, so as she *herself* was but there.

The close of the little theatre called for more of his dexterity — for they had somehow dispensed, in the latter part of the mountaineers, with both *Sadi* and *Agnes*. On he comes, and, as usual, to the purpose. Hear him—

"To this I believe I may impute that partial "disapprobation which I have just heard. The "circumstance might have been *glossed over*, but "we always prefer speaking the TRUTH."

When he comes to return thanks for the MANAGER, he slily takes credit for the *copia verborum* of his own compliments — "It is difficult (*not* "for HIM) to vary the expressions of gratitude, "which your favour has so repeatedly excited."

"The PERFORMERS, ladies and gentlemen, join "with me in acknowledging the *fullest force* of "your liberality and support; and we most respect- "fully, most gratefully, and most *affectionately*, bid "you farewell."

I should be afraid to trust such spontaneous flow with deliberate composition. Mr. Pitt was said not to be quite felicitous upon *paper*. I almost wish that Elliston would refuse even to write an *order*.

My pleasant bustling friend is supposed by some people to be rather too fond of these *personal appeals*, and there have been occasions, on which even his prudence in making them seems rather questionable. Besides, from his success, a fashion attaches to such things; and now, "every puny whipster gets his sword:" but I can safely afford him the praise of being the great and unrivalled master of all *moving* accidents; the courageous captain of *compliments;* the *standing* advertise-

ment of his own success; and the happiest *sedative* that was ever exhibited to an unruly body.

Although I shall be obliged to occupy great space in the notice of the young Roscius, yet it would be unpardonable to omit the appearance in the metropolis of an actress so excellent as Miss Duncan. When quite an infant, Miss Farren expressed her admiration of the *little wonder*, as she called her, and hoped to see her, at maturity, the future Farren of Drury Lane Theatre. This Miss Farren did *not* see, but the Countess of Derby, I hope, both saw it, and *patronized* her best representative. In some respects she surpasses her model; she is a good singer and a fine dancer. She has more *force* than her great predecessor, but not equal delicacy; and, with a finer figure, is less interesting. But she is an *actress*. Her first appearance was on the 8th of October 1804, when she performed Lady Teazle at Drury Lane Theatre. Matthews was her *Sir Peter*, and Elliston *Charles;* and both of them sinking "ten thousand fathoms" below the *originals*, and yet both possessing no mean degree of talent.

At Covent Garden Theatre on the 24th, from the non-arrival of Charles Kemble, Reynolds had to exhibit the *new* PATENTEE in his comedy of the *Blind Bargain!* He ventured, with a suitable apology, to ask Mr. Kemble to supply his brother's place. He received the following characteristic reply.

(Copy.)

"My dear Reynolds,

"I intended to do what you wish I should; and all I have to ask in return is, that you will think it no favour at all.

"Best compliments to Mrs. Reynolds.

"Yours, J. P. Kemble."

He sustained the play, by the energy with which he represented the sufferings and the worth of *Villars*. This is *refined* virtue; Emery gave to the rustic, *Woodbine*, a perfection which, like Mr. Kemble, he alone could impart. The fun of the piece was found in lexicography — Sir Andrew Analyse (Fawcett) equals Johnson himself in ludicrous definition. An AUTHOR is a man "who "never *lives* till he *dies*;" and a DUN is a fellow "such a favourite in the fashionable squares, that "he is always desired to *call again*."

The play was well received.

I have in general felt disposed to advocate the decisions of managers; because it confessedly is their interest to welcome every novelty of promise. The only thing in the *way* of sound discretion is when the director of the stage combines the two-fold functions of caterer and actor. In this dilemma Mr. Garrick was placed, in the few instances, where his decision was refuted by complete success. Those instances were the *Douglas* of Home, the *Cleone* of Dodsley, the *Orphan of China*, by Mur-

phy. The true reason in all these of his coldness was, that the *female* interest predominated — that Mrs. Cibber would have entirely overwhelmed him. This reason he was not bold enough to assign; so the first was too "*simple* and *undramatic;*" the second "*cruel, bloody*, and *unnatural;*" — and the third, after Murphy had complied with all his strictures, was "*totally unfit*" for the stage. His answers might have been couched in three words— "Lady Randolph," "Cleone," "Mandane."

The modern scribblers assail managers with the delightful *Honey Moon*,

"Et *plorata* diu meministis *fata* Bionis."

Had the genius of poor Tobin, say they, received a suitable welcome, his health would not have declined, and an amiable and excellent poet might have lived long among us in the enjoyment of his enviable reputation. Yet even here, though perhaps very few may be entitled to plead the precedent, even *here* Mr. Sheridan might reasonably have said, and Mr. Kemble certainly did say — "The Honey Moon as to *character* and *language* "is an absolute *cento* from Shakspeare and his co- "temporaries: What more are the Duke and his "wife than *Petruchio* and *Catherine?* The sham "duke is *Christofero Sly*. — Rolando is *Duretête*. "In addition to all which, we have the *Viola* of "Shakspeare combining with the equally enchant-

" ing *Bellario* of Fletcher, to form another faithful " pilgrim in the train of love."

The language was equally modelled after our *Augustan* period; and struck the ear (high praise indeed!) like rescued leaves from Mr. Warburton's Cookwench, preserving from the bottoms of his pies some of the lamented treasures of the author of Philaster and the Faithful Shepherdess. That, perhaps, Fletcher thus at second hand should be " devoutly wished" pure taste might decide in the affirmative, but no vehement censure will lie against a manager who rejects not only certain but *glaring* plagiarism. The experiment *might* have failed, — has often failed.

There was something peculiarly hard in the theatrical life of Mr. Kemble; and a frequent return of the annoyance showed it to be his fate, to find the popular favour perpetually wrested from him by candidates, whom he could not respect, if, indeed, he did not rather despise them. Cooke, if not advanced *before* him by the MANY, which I think he was, they at least allowed to stand by his side, whenever he *could* stand — but Kemble, and even Cooke himself, were now doomed to the danger that once menaced Shakspeare and his fellows at the Blackfriars, the danger and the mortification of being beaten by a *child*.

William Henry West Betty, the son of W. Henry and Mary Betty, as it appears on the parish regis-

ter of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, was born the 13th of September 1791. His mother, whose maiden name was Stanton, was the daughter of a most respectable gentleman residing near Worcester. His father, a few years after the birth of his son, retired to his native place, and carried on the linen manufactory at or near Ballynahinch, county Down.

In looking for the accidents which suggest or promote a favourite propensity, — the first thing remarkable is, that the mother of the youth was exceedingly fond of dramatic amusements, and herself, it seems, an interesting speaker; she was even fond of acting in private with her sisters. Her son therefore conceived a love of declamation from the lips of his mother.

The summer of 1802 carried Mrs. Siddons to Belfast, and the manager got up Pizarro with much splendor for that great woman's performance of Elvira. His father took Master Betty then, for the first time, to *see* a play; and fortunately for him — his youthful sight first opened on *perfection*. An enthusiasm so ardent was kindled in his mind, that his life would have been endangered by the disappointment of his hopes; he resolved to be an *actor*, and, with the simplicity of a child, he thought of nothing but *Elvira:* — he spoke only the speeches of *Elvira:* — the voice of Siddons perpetually sounded in his ear, and it was some time before his studies would take the direction even of his *sex*.

As soon as his parents saw that our youth was steady in his determination, they took the best means within their reach of ascertaining what others might think of their son's requisites for the stage; and they consulted the Belfast manager, Mr. Atkins, and his prompter, Mr. Hough. The latter gentleman was evidently the *mind* of Betty's acting; an interesting *person*, a prepossessing *countenance*, eyes of much *intelligence*, great *animation* and *ardor*, infinite *energy*, and the utmost *grace* at a period when even the graceful are commonly awkward, completed the attractions, which for some time took entire possession alike of wisdom and folly, the elevated and the humble; and produced a delirium, with which there could be no contending; for it reduced the greatest men among us to drivel nonsense on *this* subject, which has never been exceeded in the most remarkable delusions of taste.

Mr. Hough was now constituted the *guardian angel* of Betty, and directed his studies. Those who reject everything that is not *miracle*, transferred to a boy of *eleven* years old the CONCEPTION of all the characters that he performed; but the real truth may be found in the recorded opinion of one who could not but know it, and it was this: "Mr. "Hough found that he possessed a *docility* even "greater than his genius; for whatever he was "*directed* to do, he could instantly execute, and

" was sure *never to forget*. He found that his " feelings could take the *impression* of every passion " and sentiment. Whatever was *properly presented* " to his mind he could immediately *lay hold of*, " and seemed to seize, by a sort of intuitive sagacity, " the *spirit* of every sentence, and the prominent " *beauties* of every remarkable passage." And all this is indeed extraordinary in a youth of no greater age! I know the way in which an early sketch suggests to the imagination; and how she fills up the outline, which TIME refuses so constantly to confirm. I therefore willingly allow a retreat to the rashness of prophetic admiration, and permit even those who would have erected statues to him THEN, to exclaim now, "I only said, the boy was a " clever *boy*."

But something is due to the offended feelings of mature excellence, for a season thrown aside as comparatively worthless! Looking, as a *manager* must look at it, to the engagement of Master Betty as a fine commercial speculation,—as an *actor*, Mr. Kemble could not but feel deeply humbled by the absurd preference which it implied.

The first engagement of this youth was at Belfast, in the month of August 1803, and the Osman of Voltaire's Zara was the character chosen for his debût. Mr. Hough had made his pupil *do* every thing that his own memory and judgment suggested in the character; and though he could

not divest him of the *vulgarisms* of habitual speech, he yet gave him a good *tune* at least to carry them off; and nature had fully enabled the youth to put a good face upon the matter. His success was prodigious.

But the *great bell* was rung to him by Jackson, of Edinburgh, who literally must have lost his wits, were we to judge of him by the flighty stuff, which he wrote upon the boy. One paragraph, as he must have wished, shall be preserved in stage history.

"It is one of those singularities of nature, that "neither* *history* nor tradition can furnish, but "which is now beheld by us; but never can be "seen again, till the AUTHOR of all things shall, "when he thinks meet, condescend to endue another "stripling in *embryo* with a similar incredible com- "bination of stage endowments, for the gratifica- "tion of cotemporary admiration."

But he does far better than this, at all events in Scotland, for the fame of his stripling — for he places John Home himself, the author of Douglas, in his old seat at the first wing, to enable him to judge the merits of young Betty, whose *back* he could clearly discover the whole of the performance. Home was at this time in his 70th year. The

* Mr. Jackson, by this, seems at all events to have been *well* read in history. The *state* of our frame when it is "*endued* with stage *endowments*," *i. e.* in embryo, is particularly learned.

applause was such as the play had never before received, and the veteran bard seemed to think it excited by the *play* then; accordingly he rose from his seat, suddenly rushed before the curtain, bowed respectfully to the audience, and thus snatched the MOB CAP from the head of *Betty*.

His opinion, however, the opinion of the author of the play, — of Home himself, speaking of Betty *himself* — Oh,

> "If that had been forgotten,
> It had been as a gap in our great feast,
> And all things unbecoming."

Sir, said he, to the learned Jackson — "This is "the *first* time I ever saw the part of Douglas "played; that is, according to *my* ideas of the "character, as at the time I conceived it, and as "I wrote it." Poor dear man, I am afraid he had not quite cleared his head from the *misprision* of applause just noticed, and therefore it would be cruel to bind his judgment too strongly down. He had seen *Diggs*, when young, in Edinburgh,— he had seen *Barry*, when young, in London —yet this was the *first* time; —but I honour him for the first scene of his third act, and will not insult his memory!

My old friend Macready had requested Jackson to engage the Roscius for the Birmingham Theatre. He loved a *cheap* article, and was delighted that Jackson obtained him for *ten* pounds per night.

But when he arrived, he no sooner saw him than he wished to be let off so ruinous an engagement. The friends of Betty had no objection, provided he should be indemnified for the journey from Edinburgh to Birmingham. Macready hit upon a *comfortable* arrangement. "From the nightly receipts "first deduct, said he, SIXTY pounds, and then we "*divide* the remainder equally." It was immediately agreed to, and our *cautious* manager paid the boy FIFTY pounds per night instead of *ten*.

But at length we return to London, where he was to have at each theatre 50 guineas per night, and a free benefit. Mrs. Litchfield was then disengaged; but Mr. Kemble came himself and renewed her engagement. Her height suited the figure of the boy better than the overpowering stature of Mrs. Powell at the other house. He came to Covent Garden Theatre seemingly a very gentle, modest, well disposed youth; very ingenuous, not in the least conceited or spoiled, but delighted to act, and always doing his best. In rehearsing with him he appeared to be perfectly composed, and thoroughly initiated in what is called the business of the play.

Saturday the 1st of December, 1804, was the day distinguished by the first performance in town of the young Roscius. As early as one o'clock the crowd began to assemble about Covent Garden Theatre, filling the piazzas on one side of the house, and Bow Street on the other. At the proper

time all the popular arts were practised to obtain admission.

" The Theatre, too small, did suffocate
Its squeez'd contents, and more than it admitted
Did sigh at their exclusion, and return
Ungratified. For BETTY there, the *boy*,
Did strut, and storm, and straddle, stamp and stare,
And show the world how GARRICK did *not* act.
TASK, B. vi.

The utmost danger was apprehended now, because those, who had quite ascertained that it was impossible for them to *get in*, by the dreadful pressure behind them could not get *back*. At length, they themselves called for the soldiers, who with their usual temper and firmness soon cleared the fronts of the entrances, and then posting themselves properly, lined the passages, permitting any one to return, but none to enter. The pit was half filled by gentlemen who had sprung down from the boxes. The actual occupiers of the boxes by *force* retained them against the owners of the places, and the police officers, who attempted to be their ushers. All that the *gallantry* of the men would consent to was allowing ladies, in some cases, to occupy the *front* seat, while the remainder of the box was held by the strong right of *possession*. Drury Lane Theatre had a weak bill on that occasion, and really benefited 200*l*., by the turn-over. They had 237*l*. 16*s*. 6*d*. at the first account to the Busy-Body, and a half-price of 67*l*. 12*s*.

The play was Dr. Brown's Barbarossa, a very good and spirited imitation of the Merope of Voltaire, in which Garrick had formerly acted Achmet to the tyrant of Mossop. On the present occasion the cast was this:

Barbarossa - -	Mr. Hargrave.
Achmet (*Selim*,) - -	Betty.
Othman, - -	Murray.
Sadi, - - -	Cresswell.
Aladin, - - -	Cory.
Zaphira, - - -	Mrs. Litchfield.
Irene, - - -	H. Siddons.

An occasional address was intended, and Mr. C. Kemble attempted to speak it. But they would not have heard even the address of Dr. Johnson, unless Master Betty himself had delivered it; and this notion, Heaven knows how, had entered the heads, I found, of some quantity of barren spectators. The play proceeded through the first act with a tempest rather stronger than that which announces the first appearance of a pantomime. In the first scene of the second act, Mrs. Litchfield's skill made them apply a speech of Zaphira to Bonaparte.

At length Barbarossa ordered Achmet to be brought before him; "attention held them mute;" not even a whisper could be heard, till the highly honoured object of their curiosity stood in their presence. Upon the thunder of applause that ensued he was not "*much* moved" — he bowed

very respectfully, but with amazing self-possession in a few moments turned him to his work, with the intelligence of a veteran, and the youthful passion that alone could have accomplished for a task so arduous. As a slave, he wore white linen pantaloons, a close and rather short russet jacket, trimmed with sable, and a turban hat.

What first struck me was, that his voice had considerable power and a depth of tone beyond his apparent age. At the same time it appeared *heavy* and *unvaried*. His great fault grew out of the want of careful tuition in the outset. In the provincial way, he dismissed the *aspirate;* and, in his closing syllables, ending in *m*, or *n*, he converted the vowel *i* frequently into *e*, and sometimes more barbarously still into *u*. Whether he obtained this from careless speakers in Ireland or England, I cannot be sure; but this inaccuracy I remember to have sometimes heard even from Miss O'Neil.

He was at times too rapid to be distinct, and at others too noisy for any thing but rant. I found no peculiarities that denoted minute and *happy* studies. He spoke the speeches as I had always heard them spoken, and was therefore only *not* wrong where he laid vehement emphasis. The wonder was how *any* boy, who had just completed his 13th year, could catch *passion*, *meaning*, *cadence*, *action*, *expression*, and the *discipline* of the stage, in TEN very different and arduous characters, so as to give the kind of pleasure in them, that needed no *indul-*

gence, and which, from that very circumstance, heightened satisfaction into enthusiasm.

His admirers made him their *divinity;* when he was ill, he had all the beauties of England at his door, and a *bulletin* announced the degrees of his convalescence to a fevered and impatient public.

The patentees of Covent Garden Theatre had hoped to keep him to themselves; but there seemed, in an engagement for a certain number of nights, no reason why he should not be at liberty to dispose, as his parents judged fit, of the *remainder* of his time. They would naturally husband his powers as much as was consistent with that first law in the exhibition of such ventures, namely, to "take the current *while* it served." This, I believe, was done; and in his youth an ample fortune secured for his maturity.

Covent Garden Theatre was not quite so large as the Apollo Drury. I therefore, in citing his receipts for 28 nights at the latter, show the utmost force of his attraction. They were all *royal* nights. I give accurately both first and second accounts, that so curious a detail may be publicly known. For his first three nights he received 150 guineas, and after that 100 guineas nightly.

MASTER BETTY'S NIGHTS, THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE, SEASON 1804–5.

		Day.	Play.	Farce.	First Account.	Second Account.	Total.
1804. Dec.	10.	Monday	Douglas	Citizen	£ 662 8 6	£43 19 6	£706 8 0
	13.	Thursday	Do.	Of Age To-morrow	720 2 0	31 17 6	751 19 6
	15.	Saturday	Barbarossa	Spoiled Child	584 19 6	33 7 0	618 6 6
1805. Feb.	13.	Wednesday	Douglas	Deserter	673 7 6	46 10 6	719 18 0
	15.	Friday	Barbarossa	High Life Below Stairs	558 7 0	46 7 6	604 14 6
	19.	Tuesday	Lovers' Vows	Citizen	571 16 6	44 5 0	616 1 6
	21.	Thursday	Douglas	Bon Ton	652 3 6	36 13 6	688 17 0
	23.	Saturday	Tancred	Apprentice	557 10 0	48 12 0	606 2 0
	26.	Tuesday	Do.	Bon Ton	569 14 0	48 18 6	618 12 6
	28.	Thursday	Lovers' Vows	Wedding Day	565 18 6	46 6 0	612 4 6
Mar.	2.	Saturday	Douglas	Devil to Pay	605 13 0	41 8 0	647 1 0
	4.	Monday	Romeo	Irishman in London	466 8 6	55 10 6	521 19 0
	7.	Thursday	Do.	Devil to Pay	614 11 0	48 17 6	663 8 6
	9.	Saturday	Douglas	Of Age To-morrow	626 16 6	43 11 0	670 7 6
	11.	Monday	Barbarossa	Anatomist	553 3 6	50 13 6	603 17 0
	16.	Saturday	Hamlet	Lying Valet	580 7 6	40 17 6	621 5 0
	18.	Monday	Do.	Two Strings to Your Bow	482 15 6	45 9 0	528 4 6
	21.	Thursday	Douglas	Citizen	568 18 6	48 8 0	617 6 6
	23.	Saturday	Hamlet	Who's the Dupe	565 19 0	46 6 6	612 5 6
	25.	Monday	Romeo	Virgin Unmasked	475 14 0	57 16 0	533 10 0
	28.	Thursday	Douglas	Devil to Pay	628 15 0	41 0 6	669 15 6
	30.	Saturday	Hamlet	Doctor and Apothecary	511 10 0	44 16 6	556 6 6
Apr.	1.	Monday	Douglas	Bon Ton	445 14 0	59 14 6	505 8 6
	4.	Thursday	Hamlet	Liar	560 17 6	42 14 0	603 11 6
	6.	Saturday	Barbarossa	Cœur de Lion	535 12 0	45 7 6	580 19 6
	16.	Tuesday	Hamlet	Spoiled Child	531 15 6	43 10 6	575 9 0
	18.	Thursday	Douglas	Citizen	586 6 0	44 17 0	631 3 0
	22.	Monday	Do.	Of Age To-morrow	462 16 6	62 12 6	525 9 0
				28 Nights in his first Town Season — produced a total of			£17,210 11 0
						Nightly Average	£614 13 3

Of part of this amazing influx the Proprietors made the best possible use.

At Michaelmas 1804, they owed the Duke of Bedford for Rent	£ 2296 16 11
They paid it all up, and the Half-year to Lady-day, 1805	858 18 3
	£3155 15 2

D D 3

Thus the reader has seen, in the accurate detail of the treasurer, that the sum taken by the house on his eight and twenty performances, was to the astonishing amount of Seventeen thousand two hundred and ten Pounds, Eleven Shillings, sterling money. That this gives an average receipt nightly, of Six Hundred and Fourteen Pounds, Thirteen Shillings, and Three Pence. That the treasury paid him for these services no less than

£2782. 10.	being,	3 nights at	50 guineas . .	£ 157	10
		25 do.	100 do.	2625	0
				£2782	10

This is independent of his benefits, which were all free, and of which he had four in the season; and these, with presents, must have been each worth 1000 guineas to him.

The boy, however, as I have said, was certainly extraordinary — still there was, rather too apparent, a great deficiency of *elementary* knowledge. One of his admirers proposed two measures, which in his judgment, would supply all deficiencies. "Let them," said he, "buy him a *first folio* of "Shakspeare; and get some clergyman to teach "him *Greek*." Both of these *desiderata* were, I think, subsequently conferred upon Mr. Betty. I believe too, that he taught himself *English*, not less necessary to his perfection than the language of Eschylus. But it was the *prodigy* that we followed, and not the powers. Our love could not

last to his years of *discretion;* and when he really acted by his *own* understanding, his admirers had come to their senses.

In the mean time, all the favouritism, and more than the innocence, of former patronesses was lavished upon him. He might have chosen, among our titled dames, the carriage he would honour with his person; and the young Roscius had "wiped away all trivial fond records" of the excellencies of Siddons and Kemble. The ARTS strove to perpetuate his countenance and his figure: OPIE painted him on the Grampian hills, as the shepherd Norval — NORTHCOTE exhibited him in a Vandyke costume, retiring from the altar of Shakspeare, as having borne thence, not stolen,

"Jove's *authentic* fire."

Heath engraved the latter picture, which the father published *himself;* and inscribed to H. R. H. the Duke of Clarence, a decided patron of the stage. Several heads adorned the fugitive lives of him, more or less like, as the artist had been favoured with a private or public view of his features; and his *bust* was the rival of his pictures in our exhibitions. Amidst all this adulation, all this desperate folly, be it one consolation to his *mature* self, that he never lost the genuine modesty of his carriage, and that his temper at least was as steady as his diligence.

Mrs. Siddons was confined by a severe and tedious indisposition.

Mr. Kemble all this time said little; he acted Penruddock occasionally, and took a part of no great moment in a passing novelty. Indeed what can a sensible man decide, in such a night, but *attendre le jour?* It arrived at the close of the first season. Mrs. Litchfield, with her husband, had always been a devoted admirer of Mr. Kemble in tragedy. She had been an intelligent observer, a *close* one, of the new favourite, and had anticipated the return of the people to better attraction. It struck her to try, for her benefit, a tragedy of Shakspeare, acted by the *veteran* artists, and she asked Mr. Kemble whether he would play *Othello* for her night? His answer was, that he would do so with the greatest pleasure, but felt himself bound to tell her, that he thought the choice a weak one. She had concluded otherwise; and made the attempt to render the town ashamed of its injustice. Mr. Kemble acted Othello in a style of surpassing dignity and emotion. Cooke gave his utmost insinuation to Iago; and C. Kemble acted Cassio, so as to bestow a third fine male character upon the play. Mrs. H. Siddons, a lovely actress, was the Desdemona; she herself Emilia. Mr. Heathcote had the stage box, and the young Roscius sat in the front of it; and, I have no sort of doubt, received a great and hearty pleasure from the performance. The audience were enthusiastic in their applause,

and there were persons who said openly — "The charm is dispelled — the business is settled." I can almost forgive indignant excellence, for insulting the public, in its turn, with the production of a *Roscia*, in the infantine pertness of Miss Mudie.

CHAP. IV.

COLMAN'S THEATRE. — POOR SUETT. — THE VILLAGE — FRACAS. — ELLISTON AND MATTHEWS. — THE FORMER COMPARED TO ACHILLES! — HOW AN AUDIENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED. — DOWTON. — THE TAILORS. — DEATH. — RETREAT OF THE TEN THOUSAND. — MASTERS OF THE ORDER. — WINTER OF 1805–6. — ZANGA. — GLOSTER. — ROWE REALLY DOES IMITATE SHAKSPEARE IN SHORE. — PROOFS IN ABUNDANCE. — BETTY'S RETURN. — RECEIPTS CONTRASTED. — MR. HARGRAVE. — BETTY IN BROBDIGNAG. — SEASON OF 1806–7. — THE TRIUMPH OF CORIOLANUS. — THOMSON. — SIDDONS. — INSULT, HOW NOTICED BY KEMBLE. — THEODORE HOOK. — TEKELI. — MOTHER GOOSE. — ISAAC REED. — TOBIN'S CURFEW. — LETTER TO THE AUTHOR FROM MR. KEMBLE. — NOEL DESENFANS, ESQ.

MR. COLMAN now disposed of a part of the Haymarket Theatre to his brother-in-law, Mr. Morris, Mr. Winston, an old stager, and an attorney of the name of Tahourdine; a circumstance greatly indeed to be regretted; but I apprehend, at the time, unavoidable. I frankly confess that I could have wished a property created by genius, continued and perpetuated by genius, had still kept itself from the contamination of bargain and sale and commercial speculation. But "who can controul his fate?"

The genius who now held it, certainly not inferior to his predecessors, had a mind of so singular a cast, that he rather courted difficulty than avoided it. He paid at least twice over for every hundred pounds he obtained; and, to use his own figure, could not avoid the *circuitous* in any thing. "If you wanted to be in the pit of the Opera," said he, "YOU would *cross* the street from where we now "stand; a thing *impossible* to ME." A much loved friend of my youth had offered me the use of ten thousand pounds, for any theatrical speculation that I inclined to, dividing the profits with me. I mentioned the circumstance to Colman — He laughed and said "he had too much regard for me." "My dear fellow, I will not allow a *friend* to share my difficulties with me." In his usual way, he added a pleasantry relative to Sheridan's recent partner, which from delicacy I suppress. I should explain that this had no reference whatever to the present arrangement, which, I believe, *then* had never even been thought of. For many reasons I wish he had been less scrupulous. Bred a man of business, I could have aided his talent where alone he *wanted* help; and at the present moment Colman's theatre would have been his *own* house.

It had been an object of sincere regret to the lovers alike of comedy and opera, to see that Suett was rapidly sinking into the grave. I am silent over a man's indiscretions, when they do not clash with his professional duties — I have no right to

pursue him into private life, and measure the progress of a destructive habit. Mr. Suett was a victim to nervous irritability. In our happy *symposium*, at Colman's theatre, a slight refection was for some time taken in the carpenter's room, where there was a regular president for the two hours of our sittings, and where, from Sheridan to very humble names indeed, the authors and patrons of the theatre mixed in the highest good humour with the performers of both sexes, acting on any particular evening. The greatest decorum prevailed. On one of these nights, I remember, I was president, and sat decorated with the ribband and the medal: and poor Suett drew his seat next to my throne. He was uncalled for a few minutes, during which he gave me a most curious and unaffected detail of the *horrors* that invaded him nightly, whenever sleep surprised him, and left his fancy "to sport at will her wild creations." I solemnly declare that no powers, of even German invention, have yet given a series of images so terrific, nor displayed so graphically, as was this record of miseries sustained by Suett.

"I was afraid, methinks, to hear him tell it."

Poor fellow, he was buried on the 15th of July, in the burying-ground on the north side of St. Paul's Cathedral. He was attended to his grave by his two sons, and four private friends, with a considerable number of his theatrical brethren. Suett had

received the rudiments of his musical education in her Majesty's choir; and the Queen's boys were consequently in attendance, and, with the assistance of some professional singers, an Anthem was intended, and expected by a numerous assemblage of persons "who loved him living, and his memory when dead." But it was found that the design, if persisted in, would incur additional *fees* to the cathedral, amounting to THIRTY-EIGHT pounds, and it would, I suppose, have "*prophaned* the service "of the dead to sing a requiem," unless the established fees had been conceded to the chapter.

The age inscribed upon the coffin of Richard Suett, was forty-seven. No *spleen* in human nature could resist him, but his *own*.

Perhaps few places of public amusement, generally speaking, could boast of more harmony in the green-room than the little theatre. But a ludicrous instance of human frailty started forward on the following occasion. The late Mr. Cherry, a man of talent, had undertaken to dispel that delusion, (of *poetry*, surely, rather than life,) that the *country* is the seat of the virtues. In a comedy, called the *Village*, or the World's Epitome, he displayed what few villages, I believe, are too small to contain, *coquetry*, *selfishness*, and *litigation*. Two London adventurers, who sought for simplicity and purity *out* of town, return convinced that the village is only the *miniature* of the metropolis. Alas! it is not even THAT!

The piece was only just "glossed over" on the first night; on the second its fate was sealed; another play was to be given out, when on the stage rushed Elliston, and, in his *confidential* style said to the spectators — "I am so much *agitated*, on ac- "count of the TREATMENT I have received *behind* "the scenes, that I cannot NOW speak; but I will "*shortly* address you."

Great consternation arose in the house upon this intimation. What the treatment could have been was a profound mystery; they looked curiously at the actor's person; — nothing about him seemed *ruffled* but his temper. While Mr. Elliston was recovering himself, a gentleman from the boxes, or an *imitation* by Matthews, called out to him — "Mr. Elliston, take care what you do." The admonition had all the effect of superior power. He at length told them, that "*no consideration what-* "*ever* should deter him from *speaking* the TRUTH," (which produced the loudest applause from an almost bursting *curiosity*.) But he never said one word as to the TREATMENT which had *so agitated* him; and only sonorously declaimed upon "the "*triple* duty that he owed to the audience, the "proprietors, and the author." He "solemnly "declared," that "on the first night he had given "the piece out, contrary to his OWN opinion, and "now finding the house decidedly against it, "he begged to substitute the *Dramatist* for the "following night."

Every classic reader will here be reminded of the effect of Pallas upon the equally enraged Achilles; and rejoice that hostilities were not pursued in public by Mr. Elliston. Dryden's four lines of translation add the beauty of *reluctance* to the action by which Homer testifies the hero's obedience to the goddess.

> "The gods are just, and when, subduing *sense*,*
> We serve their pow'rs, provide the recompence.
> He said; with *surly* faith believ'd the word,
> And in the sheath, *reluctant*, plung'd the sword." †

What produced all this, it is said, was a hint from the manager that, had *other* actors done their duty, as he *himself* had, the result would have been *different*.

Our pleasant friend Matthews set out in life with a solid principle, "never to *give* an affront, nor *bear* "one." He accordingly retorted that, in his opinion, "all concerned had done their duty "equally well with Mr. Elliston, and some even "*better*." I believe he never, like Brutus, softened the term by a query — "*Did* I say better?"

Elliston here used, I am afraid, the only *other*

* *Feeling*, not *reason*.

† I will add that the word *plung'd* is the happiest that even Dryden could choose on this occasion; — its smartness, singly as its stands here, does more infinitely than "*sent* the blade *home* to its rest." It is a verb combining *passion* with *action*. It is not in Homer, whose sense is literally given by Pope. In the line preceding, however, they both, with an equal lack of *truth* and *taste*, omit the characteristic description — "χεῖρα βαρεῖαν."—Il. A. v. 219.

"The silver hilt his *ponderous hand* imprest."

word which, like hell, is never mentioned in a polite ear; and, it was said, that he was immediately *knocked down*. As a story usually gains by telling it, the manager was said to have *repeated* his provocation and his fall. But, at a distance from the event, it seems singular that the great pride should have been to *keep his legs* under an assault. He himself admits an *altercation* attended with some *warmth;* — says nothing whatever as to any *blow* given or returned; but as to being *knocked down*, asserts that "those who know him best must be "sensible, that he is not likely *to be seen* in any "such state of *degradation.*"

To confirm his words, out flew not "millions of "flaming swords," but a declaration, putting a decided negative upon the *knocking down;* and signed by Robert Palmer, Charles Taylor, John Palmer, W. T. P. Hutton, and the prompter, F. G. Waldron. It was dated the 21st of July, 1805.

I should never have thought this worthy of notice, but that it may help me to repress a growing evil. An actor, who feels in himself any remarkable fluency, is apt to get fond of addressing an audience: —if in consequence of any dexterity, in this mock humility of appeal, he prevail upon the *noisy* to be quiet, or the *offended* to pardon, he may even court occasions to go on and talk to them: and thus it happened in the present instance; when a really *clever* man flies before them, without considering *what* he had to say—touches, because he could *not* address them, on a matter with which *they* had nothing to

do — familiarly acquaints them with his *agitation*, but comforts their presumed eagerness to hear him with the promise that he would *shortly* address them.

Now all this proceeds from a mistake as to the relative position of the parties. Whoever are collected together in a theatre are to be treated by the actor as the PUBLIC. There ought to be always great *awe* in addressing such a body: — it should be as *seldom* done as possible, and always with infinite *respect*. They are to be treated as PATRONS whom you *reverence;* not even as FRIENDS, between whom passes a *reciprocation* of benefits; and least of all as CUSTOMERS, who are welcome to carry their money to *another* market, if they find your *bazar* incommodious, or your wares not durable, because badly manufactured. All *familiarity* on such occasions is as absurd as it is impudent. FLATTERY is the fulsome medium by which egotism seeks to gratify its busy importance. When Louis XV. passed Voltaire, after honouring with his presence the performance of Le Temple de la Gloire, "Eh! "bien," said the poet, "TRAJAN, est il *content?*" The monarch rebuked the indecorum, the flattery, and the vanity, by *not deigning to reply*.

I no sooner get clear of one nuisance, but another calls for notice. That excellent actor, Dowton, announced for his benefit, after the Birth-day, a burlesque piece, erroneously attributed to Foote, called the *Tailors;* or a Tragedy for *Warm* Weather.

It was now the 15th of August. Dowton himself received menacing letters informing him that seventeen thousand tailors would attend to oppose the performance.—Now dividing that number by NINE, as it is usual, Dowton saw that it gave an aggregate of one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight men, and eight odd tailors, which at the Haymarket is a house, if they should not choose to be an *audience*. One "forcible Feeble," who signed himself DEATH, wrote to Winston, a proprietor, and stated that, in addition to the seventeen thousand which I have already disposed of in the pit and galleries, there should, if necessary, be ten thousand more ("GEESE, villain?") tailors, sir.

In the galleries nothing but tailors could be seen. The only rivals in the needle were two females, who might be *relations*, but here history is silent. As soon as Dowton presented himself in character, perfectly in character also, a pair of sheers was thrown at him. He offered 20*l.* reward for the apprehension of the offender. Although 20*l.* might have almost tempted the *stones* to rise and inform against him, yet neither *Dung* nor *Flint* would "prate of "his whereabout, or take the present *horror* from "the time." They would say nothing, they would hear nothing — Dowton offered to substitute the Village *Lawyer* for the Tailors. They would not endure the word *Lawyer* — The LAW they had taken into their own hands, — they had been insulted, and breathed nothing but vengeance.

If such were the proceedings inside the theatre, *without* it was clear the menaces of DEATH were not to be disregarded. The door-keepers reported, that the *ten thousand* were arrived, and threatened to burst in. Mr. Graham, the magistrate, was sent for; he was a man of firmness and came immediately, with the officers from Bow-street; he made special constables of about *eight* stout men belonging to the theatre, and stationed his force at the proper points for effect. He wrote to the commanding officer of the Life Guards, requiring a full guard immediately, and that most excellent body was there in a few minutes, and the *retreat* of the ten thousand was speedily commenced.

Mr. Graham then seized the most conspicuous of the *internal* agitators, and, with one exception, they proved to be all tailors. *Sixteen* were admitted to bail in 50*l.* each, with two sureties in 40*l.* *Four* were remanded for want of bail, and "the "*rest* they ran away," being discharged. In all these cases, the historian is bound to do strict justice. Had it been in the *beginning* of the week, there had been no *sacrifice* of their interest to their feeling; they would *none* of them have been at *work*. Mr. Dowton's night was Thursday, and yet they took their *measures* accordingly. A friend of mine is of opinion, that the *connivance*, if not the furtherance, of the MASTERS was secured on this occasion. I confess I am slow to suspect any such feeling in the *higher orders* of that respectable

community. I have seen, to be sure, the rather eager exchange of the term *tailor*, for one not so tasteful*; I mean that of *clothier;* and am aware of the many instances, in which their original *lofty* seats have stooped to the *lower* house of parliament.

> " Et quantum vertice ad auras
> Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tendit.
> MENS IMMOTA MANET." *Æneid.* IV. 445–9.

But the Haymarket had this season a prouder distinction than even tailors can confer — LISTON, from the Newcastle Theatre, made his first town appearance there on the 18th of June, in the character of John Lump. Nothing merits a more distinct examination than the success of this surprising actor. If Miss Tyrer had then whispered to him, that he should ever be in such estimation as to demand a salary of sixty pounds per week, he

* " Not so *tasteful*." — The reader shall judge. The English word is derived from the French *tailleur;* that again from the verb *tailler*, which the French academy thus admirably explain. TAILLER, say they, " is to *cut*, to separate a *part* from any thing; to take from it the *superfluous;* in order to give it a certain *form* or *shape*, and *fit* it to a certain object." A definition certainly neither " inadequate nor delusive." And what is to CLOTHE? Why " to cover with *cloth*," simply; nothing more can be made of it. Here is no ART implied; no *cutting out;* no *form*, no *shape*, that is to add to grace where it exists, and bestow it where it is not. Worse than all, there is not the smallest hint, that the skilful operator always *takes away* the superfluous!

would have thought it equally probable for that morsel of woman to have attained his *own height*, or himself to have acquired that *mellow sweetness*, which charmed every ear in the voice of his future wife.

The winter campaign of 1805–6 opened rather strongly under Mr. Kemble. He played his Zanga with even increased effect, and brought that fine tragedy, the Revenge, still closer to the stage power of Shakspeare. Although the fond MANY had settled King Richard's diadem upon the head of Mr. Cooke, and it might not be even the *policy* of the management to try to disturb it, Mr. Kemble took the liberty to remind the town of his former *pretensions* to that crown; and he showed them how boldly he could both conceive and execute the character of the son of York, by quitting his former part of Hastings in Jane Shore, and assuming that of the Protector, Gloster.

Rowe in 1709 published an edition of Shakspeare, whose works, therefore, he may be presumed to have read, perhaps with more ambition to display their prominent *beauties* than critically to study the mechanism of his style, so as, in full possession of his secret, to become his imitator. However, four years after the appearance of his octavo edition of that great poet, he produced the celebrated tragedy of *Jane Shore*, written in professed imitation of the elder bard. Dr. Johnson says, "in what he thought "himself an imitator of Shakspeare it is not easy to

"conceive." The doctor thinks that even the *numbers* and the *diction* are remote in the utmost degree from his manner. Perhaps he had no very distinct recollection of Rowe when he wrote this passage, for the diction is often not only similar, but *identical.* In the part of Gloster, and among his confederates, such instances abound. The very first speech in the play has two of these lines, and a great number may be traced by diligence and memory. As to *diction,* not to point out the miserable shifts of awkward *elisions* and strange *oaths* — "Beshrew me" — "y'have" — "'twere pity" — "go to!" and such *small deer;* there are passages so turned, that even memory is deceived by likeness, and considers them stolen from the stores of Shakspeare, till she ascertain her mistake by a fruitless search for them. I am afraid, however, he thought his resemblance most secure in *violated* metaphor.

> "But thus it is when rude calamity
> Lays its strong gripe upon these mincing minions;
> The dainty gew-gaw forms *dissolve* at once,
> And *shiver* at the shock."
>
> ACT III. SCENE 1.

But it is sufficient to have hinted such matters to the eye of taste. The general reader may search however for better imitations than the following from Macbeth.

> "*Glost.*— Who can wonder
> If riot and misrule o'erturn the realm,
> When the *crown* sits *upon a baby brow?*"

" *Glost.*—The council (much I'm bound to thank 'em for't,)
Have *plac'd* a pageant *sceptre in my hand,*
Barren of power."

The second passage may be illustrated by the original, because where he changes even a *word* in the line imitated, he cannot consent to lose it, but uses it immediately in the line following.

" *Macb.*— Upon my head they *plac'd* a fruitless crown,
And put a *barren sceptre in my gripe.*"

But the greatest effect made by Mr. Kemble in Gloster, was in a speech which, to use a *Burkeism*, is Shakspeare " all over."

" Behold my arm, thus *blasted, dry,* and *wither'd,*
Shrunk like a foul abortion, and decay'd
Like some *untimely product* of the seasons.
This is the *sorcery of Edward's wife,*
Who, in *conjunction with that harlot Shore,*
And other like confed'rate *midnight hags,*
By force of *potent spells,* of bloody characters,
And *conjurations terrible to hear,*
Call fiends and spectres from the *yawning deep,*
And set the MINISTERS of HELL at work,
To *torture* and *despoil* me of my life."

Sure I am, that had Cibber introduced the preceding into the 3d act of his Richard III. it would have had the fate of his own masterly speech upon *conscience,* and been spoken and read as *genuine* Shakspeare to the end of the world. As to Kemble, the effect he produced in the passage cited was

quite electrical. The way he *rush'd* upon the table, the sudden *baring* and *display* of his arm, and the overwhelming *energy* of the accusation, brought to mind some of the recorded explosions of Ciceronian vehemence.

Mrs. Siddons, I believe, at last *settled* to Shore; and Mrs. Litchfield consequently sustained Alicia; and, though somewhat alarmed at the mighty genius beside her, acted powerfully throughout. Charles Kemble now received the gentle Hastings into his care, and, with Hargrave in Shore, was greatly admired and applauded.

The young Roscius returned in the month of December to both theatres, but his attraction this season sensibly diminished. His greatest receipt was now 550*l.* — his lowest 227*l.* 15*s.*, on Saturday the 15th of February. It was to his *Zanga*, and after Kemble's sublime effort, I imagine shame kept the people away. He was now held up with strong after-pieces too; the *Sleeping Beauty*, *Forty Thieves*, &c. They had frequently stronger houses without him. An average now taken of his twenty nights had sunk almost half from that of the first season — it was no more than 341*l.* 12*s.* 9*d.* per night. He acted Tancred for his benefit, on the 17th of May, and had only 301*l.* 18*s.* in his house; when Mrs. Jordan had 309*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, and Bannister 345*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*, Miss Duncan 310*l.* 6*s.*, Mr. Braham 387*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

On the 23d of December 1805, one of those

things occurred that disgust a delicate mind, and render the stage a profession hardly *liberal.* Master Betty that night performed *Achmet* in Barbarossa. Just before the commencement of the 4th act, on came ingenuous Murray, to tell the house, that in consequence of the disapprobation of some part of the audience, Mr. Hargrave (Barbarossa! the man playing a part to *tear a cat in*) "had suddenly "*withdrawn* himself from the theatre and could *not* "*be found.*"

Time has almost worn away from my mind the impressions of this gentleman's acting; but I think he was a sensible judicious speaker, perhaps rather like Mr. Bensley. But the wantonness of a few idiots had driven him from his profession: he was *not* to be brought back. He had, again resembling Bensley, once been in the ARMY, and carried away from it the *feelings* of a *gentleman;* he could not submit to have them *insulted* by either folly or malignity, and therefore *returned* to his proper station.

While Betty was lord of the ascendant, a rather *Lilliput* arrangement was made for him in the theatre; but on his second voyage (season), like Gulliver, he foundered upon Brobdignag, and saw himself in the power of giants. When he acted Gustavus, he was attended by Bennett and Cresswell, two of the *tallest* and *largest* men in the theatre. His mother was Mrs. St. Leger, a vast and towering figure, that overlaid all the *hero* in Gus-

tavus. His fate in town was sealed. His fashionable worshippers began to think the *old service* might be more truly rational —

> " Enchanting NOVELTY, that moon at full,
> That finds out every crevice of the head
> That is not sound and perfect, had in *theirs*
> Wrought the disturbance — But the *wane* was near,
> And his *own* cattle must suffice him soon."

THE WINTER SEASON OF 1806-7 —

Had one proud distinction, great beyond all modern rivalry, the revival, by Mr. Kemble, of Coriolanus. It has given a *cognomen* to Kemble ; and remains at the head of his performances, and of the art itself, as one of those felicitous things where the actor is absolutely identified with the part, and it becomes impossible to think of either the character or the man, without reference to each other.

There were some circumstances, extraneous to the play itself, that yet contributed to the actor's triumph. The incumbrances on his fame, the trifling child's play that had amused the town, were no longer of any moment. — He felt now assured of confirmed influence upon the public; " HOPE *brightened his crest*," and expanded his frame, and perhaps neither memory nor picture has, at any time, presented a more heroic figure than Mr. Kemble displayed, when he rushed upon the stage as Caius Marcius, on the 3d of November 1806.

I certainly, however pleasing it would be to me, shall not go through the character to mark the pas-

sages most applauded, and best given. The great Roman lives in the wisest censure, and the tablet of the general memory is inscribed with his perfections. Mr. Kemble fully shares in Coriolanus with Shakspeare himself. But he gave one passage with sublime effect in this play to which Shakspeare can lay no claim — the author of it was the Poet of the Seasons. It is addressed by Coriolanus to Aufidius, and is in the last scene: —

> "'Tis not for such as thou — so often spared
> By her victorious sword, to speak of ROME,
> But with respect, and awful veneration.
> Whate'er her blots, whate'er her giddy factions,
> There is more VIRTUE in one single year
> Of Roman story, than your Volscian annals
> Can boast through ALL your *creeping dark duration*."

This is indeed the true tone of tragedy; could he have held it, the fame of Rowe would have melted into *thin air* before him.

Nor will I omit one occasion of mentioning the NOBLE WOMAN, who, with sister excellence, performed the mother of Coriolanus. She indeed towered above her sex, and seemed worthy to bear about her the destinies of imperial Rome. From the first line to the last, all was coloured from one abstract principle; THAT, if Rome was the queen of nations, her sway was only commensurate with her COURAGE. This it was that taught her to glory in the *wounds* of victory, and to mock the feeble shrinking from the sight of blood.

" *Vol.* — His bloody brow
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes.
Vir. — His bloody brow ! O Jupiter, no blood !
Vol. — Away, you fool ! it more *becomes* a man,
Than *gilt* his trophy."

It really hurts one to remember that persons accomplished like the two great performers just mentioned, should ever have been subjected to insult, particularly at the proudest display of their beautiful and ennobling powers. But on the 18th of the month, at a repetition of this tragedy, and at the very moment when Mrs. Siddons was supplicating as Volumnia, the conqueror, her son, to spare his country; when every eye should have been rivetted to the scene, every ear burning with the pure flame of patriot vehemence — at such a moment an *apple* was thrown upon the stage, and fell between Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Kemble. He did not, nor would I have had him, quite dismiss the *character* he played for the *manager*, but, taking up the apple, he advanced indignantly to the front of the stage, and thus addressed the audience : —

" Ladies and Gentlemen,

" I have been many years acquainted with the benevolence and liberality of a London audience; but we cannot proceed this evening with the performance unless we are protected, especially when *ladies* are thus exposed to insult."

A person in the gallery called out — " We can't hear."

"Mr. Kemble, (*with increased spirit,*) "I will *raise* my voice, and the GALLERIES shall *hear* me." (*Great tumult.*)

"This protection is what the AUDIENCE owe it to themselves to *grant* — what the PERFORMERS, for the credit of their profession, have a right to *demand* — and WHAT I will venture so far to *assert*, that, on the part of the PROPRIETORS, I here offer a hundred guineas to any man, who will disclose the *ruffian* who has been guilty of this act." (A murmur, only in the gallery.)

"I throw myself, Ladies and Gentlemen, upon the high sense of breeding, that distinguishes a London audience; and I hope I shall never be wanting in my duty to the public; but nothing shall induce me to suffer insult."

The gallery told him that this apple of discord was thrown at some of the *disorderly females* in the boxes, and only by accident fell upon the stage. Our MORAL friends, too, sent down a request, that those *riotous ladies* might be suppressed, and Mr. Kemble good naturedly promised "that all possible methods should be taken to keep them in order." And then the play was finished.

Under the second management of Wroughton, one of the most ingenious and pleasant men of his time, Theodore Hook, brought his melodrame of *Tekeli* before the public. His unfailing spirits, his whim, invention and versatility, his improvisation

and keen discernment of character, have delighted me, years ago, in society ; and seem now to be settling into some public and permanent fame. His Tekeli was admirably played.

Necessarily compelled to omit much novelty, and contract more, from the rapid approach to my assigned limits, I should never presume to lift my Christmas glance again towards the sacred symbol of druid superstition, were I capable of omitting the birth of Mother Goose, on the 28th of December, in Covent Garden Theatre. She is said to have been a disputed offspring, and claimed alike by Dibdin and by Farley — but she has yet superior honours, and derived her true efficacy from the nursery. She brought with her thence that wondrous bird, which, in the language of Lafontaine,

"Pondoit tous les jours un œuf-d'or."

In a word, the theatre never acquired a more favourite pantomime. Little Simmons, the *Roman*, thought himself honoured in Mother Goose. — Here, too, the Bolognas displayed unrivalled activity, and Grimaldi, who had been slighted at Drury Lane, at once proved himself the great master of his art.

I cannot well avoid another successful piece by Kenney, called *False Alarms*, or My Cousin — it was an opera, performed at Drury Lane, for the first time, on the 12th of January 1807, with im-

mense applause. Braham composed his own songs, all of them still vocal, and he accompanied himself on the grand piano forte, when he delivered to every warbler in the land the simple ballad *Said a Smile to a Tear*. His accompaniment was one of those rattles in music called a *battery* — but his touch is very brilliant, like his style of singing, and he was hardly permitted to leave the instrument.

Mr. Kemble, about this time, had to regret the loss of his old friend, Isaac Reed, Esq., who died on Monday the 5th of January 1807, having just completed the 65th year of his age. I used to meet him occasionally at Mr. Kemble's hospitable board, with such men as, either for instruction or amusement, will not easily be excelled, with Mr. Malone and Dr. Charles Burney. On such occasions Mr. Reed was always referred to for *exact* information, The recollection of Mr. Malone was general rather than minute; he rather knew where to *find* anything than carried it about with him. Reed was a *repeater* as to time. You had only to touch the subject, he struck instantly and *truly*. He had a look of *severity*, though one of the gentlest of human beings; and sat with his countenance *declined*, and preserving an unaltered *frown*. He was the *shade* to the light manner of Mr. Malone, who talked of literature without a tinge of pedantry, with a seeming imitation of the *laughing* manner of Sir Joshua Reynolds. To draw an illustration from the manly game of cricket, which

I still love to *see*,— Reed stood at the *wicket*, and either struck or stopt admirably. Malone sometimes *bowled* to him — but never took him *off* his guard, or caught him out. With a sort of a *run* and a *flourish* before he delivered his ball, he would thus address his stern antagonist: "I think the "most important thing done for Shakspeare (always "excepting our friend Dr. Farmer's Essay,) was "Tyrwhitt's use of that curious pamphlet *Greene's* "*Groatsworth of Wit*, which first appeared in the "year 1592 or 1593." — Two! *struck* the accurate Reed.

Mr. Reed seemed to allow of Steevens's ascendancy without dispute. The latter used his chambers, his library, himself, in his literary schemes, without ceremony: and shy as Mr. Reed was at all times of seeing his name before the public, so as to declare "that if the pillory were the alternative, he "believed he should prefer it," — yet Steevens would shroud anything he chose under the *well-known* editor of Dodsley's old plays, and his friend, if he ventured at times a murmur, was overborne by that plausibility which had not seldom governed the criticism of Doctor Johnson.

Few men exerted greater influence upon society than Isaac Reed. He had ably and steadily conducted his magazine for twenty-five years; and, amid all the changes of opinions, adhered inflexibly to his OWN: — they led him to be the strenuous but enlightened defender of our CHURCH and STATE.

The *extent* of his literary labours was prodigious; but, as it ought always to be, this was as nothing compared with that of his studies. His mind was the *spirit* of his library. He was indeed a treasure to Mr. Kemble, while forming his dramatic collection. To the stage he had paid an attention which has never been approached. I speak this on the fullest evidence, for his Notitia Dramatica are now lying before me.

To proceed with our theatrical notices. *The Curfew* of the excellent TOBIN fully ratified the judgment passed upon his Honey Moon. In thought, in diction, he was decidedly a poet. But he seems to have avoided every claim to originality — to have coveted the fame of a mimic, and to have been proud of his uncommon likeness to *other* people. He is in the Curfew like the *Revenge* — like the *Castle Spectre* — like the *Battle of Hexham* — like the *Iron Chest* — like the *Children in the Wood* — and the children of most dramatists. But his resemblance never distresses; it is choice, not necessity, that borrows in Tobin; and he covers all by a brilliant fancy and a mellifluous versification. The eagerness of the public to see this piece was extreme. It was finely acted, and but that it had a weak fifth act, might have yet remained a favourite upon our stage.

Whatever Mr. Kemble thought of the writers of modern comedy, they were often deeply indebted to his kindness; and sometimes his performance

absolutely saved a weak effort of an able man. It was thus that his Reuben Glenroy brought Morton through in his comedy of *Town and Country*. The play rose upon the town at every succeeding repetition, and became even popular at last, here and in the country.

The "tales of wonder" were not collected by Monk Lewis merely to *astound* the people for a time, and then, as Shakspeare expresses himself, "to fust unused"—from *Lord Ronald*, and the *grim white woman*, the little *lord* of the NURSERY constructed a new grand romantic melo-drama, called *The Wood Dæmon*, or the Clock has Struck. On its first night the *dialogue* seemed to have frequently emerged from the spot just mentioned; but the childishness was omitted by the author's discretion, and the terrors became worthy of the grown followers of the marvellous.

> "Never shalt THOU and glory sunder!
> Child of wonder — child of WONDER."

Upon the close of the Covent Garden season on the 23d of June, with Hamlet and Mother Goose, Mr. Kemble left town on a visit to his kind friend, Lord Guilford, at Wroxton Abbey. While he was there I wrote him an account of poor DESENFANS' death, which happened on the 9th of July, 1807. He thus noticed the communication.

(COPY.)

" *Wroxton Abbey, July 14th*, 1807.

" MY DEAR BOADEN,

" So little am I a man of this world, that, I believe, it is nearly a fortnight since I have looked into a public print; consequently your kind letter was the first intimation I had of the decease of our excellent friend. Knowing, as I did, the state of his health for some time before I left London; and having, indeed, for years observed with pain the progress of his maladies, it is without surprise, and, as far as regards poor Desenfans himself, without sorrow, that I hear of his release from his protracted and insupportable sufferings. May the innocency of his mind, and the benevolence of his heart, meet that reward which is prepared for the virtuous in a state of perfect and perpetual bliss!

" I write to Sir Francis by this post: — he has lost an old friend, and I feel keenly for him.

" Lord Guilford begs his kindest remembrances to you. Believe me always, my dear Boaden,

" Yours truly,

" J. P. KEMBLE."

What the recent grief of Burke stated of the excellent Sir Joshua Reynolds, was in degree applicable to Noel Desenfans. " He was the centre " of a very great variety of agreeable societies, " which were dissipated by his death." He de-

lighted to receive his friends; and he entertained them with elegance, and even splendor. The room in which we dined was decorated, so as to defy a parallel even in the mansions of our nobles. We were surrounded by *thirteen* historical subjects by POUSSIN, painted in the finest time of that classic artist.

If ever man possessed the faculty of rendering society tasteful and happy, it was Desenfans. He was too well bred to be the hero of his own table—the charm he possessed was the absence of *self* display, exchanged for the address to draw forth the talents of *others*. He could continue any subject just as long as it pleased, and change it without any appearing check or abruptness. In the midst of great bodily sufferings, he excelled ALL in hilarity, and the goodness of his nature impressed his countenance with uniform benevolence.

Mr. Desenfans in early life had distinguished himself in polite letters, so as to have received the applause of Voltaire and Rousseau. He was proud, as he well might be, of the great men of his country; but had lived long enough among us to have acquired the true feeling for English genius. His infirmities confined him, for the most part, to the house, but his curiosity was insatiable after every object of liberal science; and his friend Sir Francis Bourgeois, who mixed largely in active life, on his return home, delighted to lay before him his daily gleanings from the world without.

Of his taste in painting, the collection bestowed by Sir Francis, in pursuance of his pleasure, upon Dulwich College, will be at once a record and a monument. Magnificent as his collection certainly was, one *desideratum* the writer of this faint tribute was so fortunate as to supply. He had great satisfaction in seeing before him the portraits of Louis the *Fourteenth* and Boileau. Chance, during the progress of the French Revolution, led me to purchase of an emigrant Rigaud's portrait of Racine. He was so good as to accept from me the other great poet of that reign, whom the King had joined with Boileau in the task of recording his glories; and Mr. Desenfans was made infinitely happier by the present, than Racine was by the appointment.

CHAP. V.

CHARLES YOUNG — HIS FIRST HAMLET. — RIGHTS OF THE WINTER PATENTEES DEFINED — IN LAW — IN EQUITY. — THEIR DANGER — THEIR ERRORS. — THE STAGE. — MRS. H. JOHNSTON'S RETURN. — VIOLENT CLAMOUR. — DISCUSSION. — CHARLES KEMBLE'S WANDERER. — MISS SMITH. — HER INTELLIGENCE. — BEGONE DULL CARE. — THE WORLD. — THE COMEDY OF ERRORS. — RETIREMENTS. — MISS POPE — HER MERITS. — INIMITABLE BURLESQUE OF TRAGEDY. — STORACE. — MRS. MATTOCKS. — BOTH QUIT THE PROFESSION. — THE STEADINESS OF COOKE. — THE MISERABLE CONFLAGRATION OF THE THEATRE.

I STEP a little back in my narrative to have the pleasure of noticing the first performance in town of Charles Young, and in the character of Hamlet. My amiable and accomplished friend, Mr. R. Westall, I remember, begged that we might see this debût together: he had a side-box at the Haymarket on that night, and we received very great satisfaction from that able and judicious actor. Confessedly, however, it was the Hamlet of Kemble; discriminated only by the personal perfections, or, if you will, imperfections of the performer. It was not so philosophic, but more solemn — there

was more vehemence and less pathos — the volume of voice was great, and of good tone, but the articulation was not nice, and he laboured under a lisp whenever the letter *s* occurred. But there was great ardour, vast animation, powerful action, untiring energy, and good sense. We were able very sincerely to congratulate him, upon what announced, to *such* a man, the certainty of fame and fortune. Mrs. Litchfield was the *Gertrude* of the play, and the best that I have seen.

I do not anticipate any occasion for a more minute discussion of the subject, and therefore during a rather considerable "blank of *nature's* "works" at the theatres, I am tempted to look into the PATENT RIGHTS of the winter proprietors. The evil which I predicted, from the error as to the Royalty, had fearfully increased; the non-descript minor theatres became seriously alarming, if they even failed; ruinous, if they succeeded. Every body knows, without touching upon the public amusements of families, that it is not indifferent to the evening wanderer, whether he pays a shilling *more* for his entertainment or a shilling *less*; that of so numerous a crowd, many are not nice, so as they are amused; and some, from their kind of bringing up, actually prefer the coarser entertainment. To open, therefore, ANY places of amusement must injure the play-house. What other injury it may do, may be left to the imagination, if indeed such

a question cannot be more accurately resolved by the memory.

The patentees at length felt themselves seriously bound to submit their case to their legal advisers, and counsel were of opinion — "THAT they might "and ought to put down the encroachments upon "their property. — THAT his Majesty having gra- "ciously made his election, by *patent appointment*, "as to *what* theatres should exist in Westminster, "the Lord Chamberlain *cannot* infringe on those "patents, or *legally* license any other place for "*theatrical* representation, without the *consent* of "the patented theatres. And certain it is, that from "the day the first royal patent was granted to old "Drury, through the whole of Mr. Garrick's time, "and ever since, until the chamberlainship of Lord "Salisbury, the uniform practice at the Chamber- "lain's office was, to *refuse* to listen to an applica- "tion even for a *single night*, though for a charity "benefit, unless the party applying brought with "them the *previous consent*, in writing, of the pro- "prietors of the established theatres." So much for the LEGAL right, grounded on patent, confirmed by usage.

But let us look a little at their title in EQUITY; by which it must appear that the Lord Chamberlain, even, ex officio, if the right were *in* him, is *bound* by positive covenant *not to grant* any new license for any dramatic exhibition — FOR, after the result of a long discussion and arbitration, a regular deed

was executed, styled the FINAL ARRANGEMENT, recognizing and guaranteeing the exclusive rights of the three established theatres, which deed received the sanction of his Majesty, and was signed, under his royal pleasure, by his Chamberlain, the Marquis of Salisbury; it was also honoured by the concurrence of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who signed it himself, as did also his Grace the late Duke of Bedford.

On the faith of this settlement, so guaranteed, the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre received from the proprietors of Drury Lane Theatre fifteen thousand pounds for their dormant patent. The King's Theatre in the Haymarket contributed thirty thousand pounds, on recovering its license, to the losses of the Pantheon Opera undertaking; and FINALLY, this deed formed the whole foundation for the rebuilding of Drury Lane Theatre, in which undertaking a property of not less than three hundred thousand pounds has been embarked, and all in the *confidence* and on the *faith* of this arrangement, secured under such high authority.

Now with this irrefragable document before them, the reason of the public will have no difficulty whatever as to the *actual* RIGHTS of the patentees. How these have been evaded, or compromised, or dropped, would be a tedious enquiry, and very unfit for a work like this, drawing necessarily to its close. But if, on the statement of *then* existing circumstances, the grievance seems to be as unaccountable

as it was oppressive, what will be said of their case, when a few revolving months shall have added the unparalleled calamity of two royal theatres, erected or renewed at immense expense, being both totally destroyed by fire, within 157 days of each other?

I know the humble pretences and earnest assurances by which, at first, office is surprised into innovation; and the favourable plea that is generated when once property has been embarked. But I must contend, that in the case above stated, a positive CHARTER was conferred, and has been violated nearly with impunity.

But in all such matters, we must not look solely to individuals, who may be considered, in the harshest view of their case, as highly *favoured* trustees for the public. The *interests* of that public, as they originated the trust, under the benevolence of the sovereign, so they are, and should be, paramount to any individual advantages; and the state, if it forfeited the grant for any abuses of its enjoyment, could compensate, if it was judged expedient, any pecuniary suffering. But how should such abuses exist, and have they ever been for a moment pretended? The Lord Chamberlain, by his office, licenses every production of the stage — and bending slightly, as the managers of theatres must do, to the humours and fashions of the day, (still, even so doing, under superior sanction,) will any writer venture to assert, with reading beyond a

horn book, that the productions a century ago were not infinitely more gross in their plans, and more loose and even prophane in their expression, than anything exhibited in our own times? I do not claim for MANAGERS the whole credit of such a reformation; I believe it may be, in a great degree, the better taste of the present day; which, whether substantially or not improved in virtue, (I hope even THAT,) is unquestionably more averse to the *public* expression of either prophanèness or indelicacy. The proprietors, then, have not by any moral turpitude or indifference, or want of judgment, merited the evils which they sustain; or the fearful ruin in their prospect, opposed, as they must be, by so many tempting rival exhibitions.

That I have thought them blameable in many points, I have occasionally said, with that feeling for the stage itself, which he who had it not, would indeed be unworthy to occupy it. In my judgment, they erred in any *very* considerable enlargement of their houses. It was not likely, that a structure calculated to hold more than 400*l.* nightly, would be *fitted* for that best triumph of the actor's art, the general sight of his expression, the perfect enjoyment of his declamation. A thousand nice *shades* of the one, and almost all the *taste* of the other, are destroyed by a vast space, across which they cannot pierce; and therefore, as hopeless efforts, they are at last discontinued. Rant and grimace are the ordinary substitutes. As a proof

that, sometimes, TASTE and INTEREST go together, all the losses of the proprietors *commenced* in their large theatres — I had almost said *proceeded* from them. Enough, however, on this subject for the present. If my notion be incorrect, it is but the sentiment of an individual to whom no great influence attaches any way, that I know of. According to my measure, I certainly *endeavour* to think rightly, upon this and all subjects — I can only, however, assert the integrity of my motives.

I return to the stage itself with but little pleasure, for, in addition to the "blank of nature's works" in the drama, the present season made a most fearful one in her representatives, by retirements which have, to the present hour, never been replaced. Previous to attending the departure of three excellent actresses, whom I had the pleasure to know, I have to mention the return of Mrs. H. Johnston to Covent Garden Theatre, on the 30th of December, after an absence of two years. Beatrice was not exactly the part that I should have chosen in her situation — it is too violently pert, too decidedly *haggard* and reckless. In the present instance it bespoke *assurance* under a sense of indiscretion, and provoked rather than soothed any irritation against her.

It will always be a disputed question, whether the public have any right to *refer* to the private conduct of those whose talents are displayed for their

amusement. I neither remember the particular allegations made against Mrs. H. Johnston, nor the very opposite statements by her and her husband. I am rather disposed to look a little at the *principle* of public censure with relation to the professors of the stage. Let us state an extreme case, which, as it never *may* have occurred, so it never may be likely to occur, where this check *exists*. Let us suppose an actress of the greatest, or of humbler powers, a wife and a mother; — let us suppose such a woman notoriously light while she remains with these ties, and utterly shameless when she throws them off; — let us see her, under the protection, as it is called, of wealth and fashion, becoming again a parent; and, under many changes, renewing that sacred character, but with a total indifference to the children, lawful or unlawful, which she has produced; — let us further suppose, (for there is a *necessity* for this supposition to warrant the *notice*,) that these are facts as well known as the theatre which they sully, and as capable of proof as any miserable larceny that peoples either our prisons or our remote settlements: — is a public to be told, that it has in such a case no jurisdiction; that its sole duty is to enjoy its amusement, whether to *weep* or *laugh*, while it encourages infamy in its course, and makes harder by its indifference even the callous heart? What is the great corrector of life? Public opinion. What most deters from crime? Public opinion. But it may be said, the culprit is not *single*

in her offence: — Perhaps not. But if there exist instances by thousands which you *cannot* reach, are you for that reason to spare the offender whom you can? Nay, more, are you to fawn upon the talent, while you loathe its possessor? Are you to worship, by the glare of the stage, that WANTON, whose exploits, in the public journals, cannot be read by decency at your breakfast table? I leave the VIRTUOUS and the RATIONAL of society to reply to the question. But I beg pardon of the reader; I have been too long detained from Mrs. Johnston. A perfect yell of fury burst out on her appearance; evidently private vengeance, rather than public justice: — the great mass of the spectators was confessedly unprejudiced, and therefore humane, if not favourable. Poor creature, she seemed convulsed with emotion, breathless and incapable of utterance, dying almost where she stood. Suddenly, however, she sprung forward to the front of the stage, and lifting up her clasped hands, silently besought the mercy or protection of the house. It was afforded, and she struggled with difficulty through the character and the evening. On the 8th of the following month, having prepared her way in the newspapers, she made a second appearance, in Letitia Hardy, in the Belle's Stratagem. A stronger force was now embodied against her; both sides were prepared. The uproar was terrific, the actress was bathed in tears, but collected; she advanced, and her action procured attention to

what she should say—she told the audience that in "*many* instances she had been much wronged, and "endured much unmerited reproach." Another clamour in the shape of *denial*, was shouted against her. The spectators, however, wanting the play, it proceeded, except when any point in the dialogue offered an opportunity to her persecutors. Upon the fine burst of Miss Hardy, as to what she would do for a HUSBAND "*worthy* of her love," the gale became a perfect hurricane, as might naturally be expected. She found it impossible to recover her powers, so as to do even *her* slender justice to the character; and the evening of the 8th of January afforded no enjoyment, unless to the *least* MANLY part of the audience.

On the 12th of January 1808, Charles Kemble got up from the French a drama, in three acts, called *The Wanderer*. It afforded some striking opportunities to Miss Smith, a young lady of fine talents, with a face of very powerful expression, and in its effect a good deal like that of Mrs. Siddons. The *intelligence* of her look was amazing. She had made studies of no mean extent in her art, and ought always to have superseded the annoyance, not necessity, of a vast crowd of young ladies, annually "piping their hysteric "changes on Juliets and Dorindas, Pollys and "Ophelias." This lady is the present Mrs. Bartley: —it may be agreeable to her to know, that a very attentive observer of the stage, for more than

FORTY years, still thinks of her *mute* expression of the PASSIONS with unabated pleasure. Her action was beautifully appropriate, and at every change, she composed her figure into a position so graceful, as to seem the prepared study of some profound artist.

Lest her rivals, in the most jealous of all professions, should suppose this the tribute of private friendship, I guard it by the declaration, that, off the stage, even her person is unknown to me; and that to the present hour I have never had the honour of speaking to her.

I could wish to be able to afford more than a passing word to the comedy of Begone dull Care, and a much better one called *The World*, by Kenney. The Two Gentlemen of Verona, purified by Mr. Kemble, and splendidly decorated, though acted by himself and Pope, and Miss Smith, and Miss Norton, with the rich comedy of Liston, Munden, and Blanchard, was a revival that might as well have slept undisturbed; for, except a few prettinesses in the dialogue, it is, though Shakspeare, Samson shorn of his vigour, and trifling in the flowery lap of Dalilah.

On the 26th of May, Miss Pope, the dramatic heiress of Kitty Clive, *the* chambermaid *par eminence*, quitted Drury Lane Theatre, and the profession of which she was so great a mistress. She acted for the first, and *only* time, Deborah Dowlas in Colman's Heir at Law; and I imagine he sup-

plied the few lines, which she spoke after the play in the character of Audrey, wherein she truly said, that "she had parted with *Touchstone* (King), and "was now come to part with her *other* friends." They were, on that night, uncommonly numerous and brilliant, and kind, and she received their last applause wisely, without claiming or needing a particle of their indulgence. Yet she had continued to act on the stage of Drury Lane for a period of *more* than FIFTY years.

Clive, when she was young, paid the highest compliment to Miss Pope's understanding; for when she was going on the stage, to act, for the second time, Corinna in the Confederacy, she said to her, "My dear Pope, you played for a young "actress particularly well on your first night—You "must now endeavour to act still *better*, and yet "expect to meet with *less* applause. It is proper "you should be told this, lest disappointment "*damp* your spirits, and sink you below *yourself*."

On the 6th of May 1802, their Majesties commanded her to act Mrs. Heidelberg, in the Clandestine Marriage, for the express purpose of seeing how she could replace, in that part, the admirable Clive. She was at this time the only surviving performer of its original cast.

Perhaps her fame, like all other reputation, will rest most securely upon *truth*. She, as an actress, "held the mirror [steadily] up to nature." Yet she had a singularly fine talent for burlesque. The

critic of my standing touches upon a style in female tragedy, which has long been discontinued; it resulted from the fashion of the dress — it might be called the swimming or voluptuous; and the actress seemed to totter under the weight of her *superior* charms. The spectator's eye was attracted to the visible palpitations of the heroine; and as the spread of the hoop below kept the arms in a nearly constant movement of floating grace, — the hand, more frequently than it is now, was prest upon the bosom: it was the MODE, and *perhaps* perfectly decorous. Mrs. Siddons never *thought* it so; and from the external quiet of that seat of emotion was most stupidly indeed alleged to *feel* really nothing while on the stage. What *should*, or *can* be felt by any perfect artist, has been thoroughly discussed by nobody but *Diderot*. But to return to Miss Pope; with the usual sauciness of *comedy* towards her imperious sister, she had looked attentively at all this discipline of the former queens of the stage; and in Tilburina in the Critic let her personal satire fly at the *moving* charms of her earlier days. Mrs. Crawford must have been ready to *expire* at this burlesque, in all the exquisite approaches, the jets and balances, swoonings and ravings of Tilburina. Of late years the ridicule seemed misplaced, for it was like nothing that the young had ever seen in tragedy.

On the 30th of the same month, Madame Storace, the unapproachable *buffa* of English opera

and musical farce, also took leave. She actually made, as Shakspeare has it, " a swan-like end, " dying in music," for she warbled her farewell in two dozen most applicable lines, written for her by Colman : but strong as she certainly was, she had miscalculated her force ; the last line — " Farewell " — and bless you all for ever," quite subdued her ; and she was borne off the stage in a senseless state.

Mrs. Mattocks, eight days after this, withdrew herself from the stage of Covent Garden. The play was the Wonder, and it was one truly, as to *first* appearance as well as *last*. Mrs. Mattocks acted Flora with all her original sprightliness, though she had been an actress close upon *sixty* years. Mr. Cooke acted for her Don Felix, being his first appearance in the fiery Spaniard — Emery, then first in town, tried to convert his genuine *York* into broad Scotch — and Miss Smith then began to sustain Violante with delicacy and point. Poor Cooke had no shyness in promising his aid on kind occasions like the present, only he sometimes too obviously needed *help* himself. But here he *would* do, and he did do, ALL nobly. After the play, he recited Garrick's ode to Shakspeare ; and, retiring for an instant, returned leading in Mrs. Mattocks. Through the whole of her address, which was in plain prose, thanking the audience for the public favour of 58 years, Mr. Cooke *supported* her. A rather too solemn announcement of " prepara-

"tion for the journey which we must all take" almost overpowered her; but she recovered enough to make her most scientific and graceful courtesies to the house; and her *steady* friend led her off the stage, with all the honours that could crown so valuable an actress.

As to successor, she has had none — her *widows* renounce administration, and the *Mac Tabs* have retired to their native seats; where they may be presumed, with somewhat less *effect*, to value themselves equally upon the *antiquity* of their families.

The most disastrous of seasons commenced at Covent Garden Theatre on the 12th of September 1808. The entertainments of the evening were *Macbeth* and *Raising the Wind*. Mr. Kemble had been unwell, but was now quite recovered. Mrs. Siddons had not acted for many months; indeed a notion was abroad that she had absolutely retired from the stage. She had, however, returned to it in the best health, and at all events, in such characters as were now preferred, with even *augmented power*, the silent operation of experience and time. Together, these incomparable tragedians seldom failed in their efficacy upon the town; and an audience piled to the roof attested the attraction of Shakspeare and themselves. In eight days from this "great feast" of dramatic excellence, the splendid scite of the triumph was a mass of flaming ruins.

DESTRUCTION OF COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

About four o'clock in the morning of September the 20th, this extensive building was discovered to be in flames; and so fierce and rapid was the fire, that no exertion could stop its course. Within less than three hours after its commencement, the whole of the interior was destroyed: nearly all the scenery, wardrobe, musical and dramatic libraries, and properties of all kinds, were a heap of smoking ruins. A considerable number of engines promptly attended, but there was a total want of water for some time, the main pipe having been cut off with the intention of laying down a new one, and above an hour elapsed before the engines could be supplied. They afterwards played with the greatest possible effect for more than an hour; when the roof of the theatre fell in with a dreadful crash, and thus announced the destruction of the interior of the building. The fire raged with most violence at the upper end of Bow-Street, on the western side of which seven houses were destroyed, including the public-house called the Strugglers. In Hart-Street the flames communicated to the houses on the opposite side of the street from the theatre, and four of them caught fire at the same moment; but by the great activity of the people and firemen, they suffered little more than a severe scorching. Great apprehensions were entertained for the safety of Drury Lane Theatre, as the flakes of fire were

carried by the wind with much force in that direction. A great number of people mounted the roof, ready, in case of actual fire, to open the large cistern of water provided there. All the people in the neighbourhood were employed with their servants in extinguishing the flakes of fire as they fell upon the roofs or in the yards. This was the whole extent of injury sustained in the neighbourhood; but the theatre itself was totally consumed. The Ship tavern, and part of Mr. Brandon's, the box-keeper's office, were all that remained at that angle.

The most painful part of this disastrous event remains to be described. At an early stage of the fire, a party of firemen broke open the great door under the Piazza, Covent Garden; and having introduced an engine into the passage, they directed it towards the galleries, where the fire appeared to burn more fiercely; when, dreadful to relate, the burning roof of the passage fell in, and buried them, with several others who had rushed in along with them, in the ruins. It was a considerable time before the rubbish, which now blocked up the door, could be cleared away. When it was effected, a miserable spectacle presented itself. The mangled bodies of the dead and dying appearing through the rubbish, or being discovered in each advance to remove it. At twelve o'clock eleven dead bodies had been removed into the church-yard of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Three of them were firemen belonging to the Phœnix Fire-office. Some were

sent to the Middlesex Hospital, miserably mangled, with broken limbs, and dreadful bruises. Several respectable young men having approached too near the flames, perished by the steam which arose from the burning ruins upon which the engines were playing. The number of persons whose lives were unfortunately sacrificed to their activity and assiduity amounted to 20. Many others (more perhaps in number) were severely and dangerously wounded. The insurances on the house did not exceed 50,000*l.*, and the savings from the Shakspeare premises about 3,500*l.* more; the whole not more than one-fourth part of the sum requisite to replace the theatre. The *actual loss* was immense; besides the usual stock of scenery, there was an additional quantity for a new melo-drama, which was shortly to have been brought forward. Of the originals of the music of Handel, Arne, and many other eminent composers, there were no copies; and of many other pieces of music an outline only had been given. Some excellent dramatic productions, the property of the theatre, were also lost for ever.

The Bedford and Piazza Coffee-houses escaped the flames, owing to a wall which had been erected by the proprietors of the theatre a short time before, to guard *themselves* from the danger of the adjoining premises. Another accident happened on the Wednesday, by the falling of a wall in Hart-Street, which killed one man, and bruised several others.

They had been warned of their danger, but disregarded it.

The organ, left by Handel as a legacy to the theatre, stated to be worth upwards of 1000 guineas, and which was only used for the oratorios, was consumed. The Beef-Steak Club, which held its meetings at the top of the theatre, lost their stock of wines, valued at 1500*l.* Mr. Ware, the leader of the band, lost a violin worth 300*l.*, which had been left behind that night for the first time in two years. Mr. Munden, his wardrobe, not to be replaced under 300*l.* Miss Bolton, her jewels; and the other performers property, in the aggregate, to a considerable amount. Some of the private houses were not insured, and others but partially. The receipts of the preceding night's performance, with the books and papers belonging to Mr. Brandon's office, were the only property of consequence belonging to the theatre saved. It is almost too painful to describe the situation of those persons who were dug out of the ruins alive; they were, in general, so dreadfully burned, as scarcely to be recognised by their nearest relatives, and their flesh, in several instances, literally peeled from off the bone. The dead bodies taken from the same place were nearly shapeless trunks. An immense concourse of spectators thronged all the avenues to the ruins on the three first days; and among the nobility who visited the coffee-houses

adjoining, were the Dukes of York and Cambridge, Marquis Tweedale, &c. Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the prompt attendance and active exertions of the volunteer corps, who prevented many depredations.

. Twelve persons perished by the falling in of the Apollo Room, viz.: — R. Cadger, J. Holmes, J. Hunt, W. Jones, J. Evans, J. Crabb, T. Mead, W. Wrigglesworth, J. Kilby, T. James, and two more whose names were unknown.

J. Sayers, a fireman of the Phœnix Insurance Company; Mr. Hewitt, a plumber; J. Beaumont, a private in the 1st Guards; T. Harris, jun., of Hyde-Street, optician; R. Bird, a coach-maker; J. Pilkins, a labourer; Steevens, an engineer of the Phœnix, died in St. Thomas's Hospital; a second private of the 1st Guards, in the greatest agonies, at the Military Hospital; Musket and Fish, two other firemen of the Phœnix, in St. Thomas's Hospital.

. Let it be remembered that all these sufferers perished, from that ardour that made them disdain their personal security. They left a melancholy feeling indeed in the breasts of the proprietors of the theatre, who all declared, that their losses as to property, immense as that was in its amount, were in their estimation trifling, compared with such a *sacrifice* of the brave, the humane men, who perished for them. A subscription was immediately opened for the pecuniary relief of their families.

In the morning after the fire, as soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to Great Russel Street, to ascertain the state of the sufferers, and give any little aid that I might be able to render. Honest John Rousham in silence let me in, and walked upstairs before me into Mr. Kemble's dressing-room. He was standing before the glass, totally absorbed, and yet at intervals endeavouring to shave himself.

Mrs. Kemble was sitting in tears upon a sopha, and on seeing me exclaimed, "O Mr. Boaden, we are totally ruined, and have the world to begin again!"

His brother Charles, wrapt up just as he came from the fire, was sitting *attentive*, upon the end of the sopha; — and a gentleman, much attached to Mr. Harris, who in and about the theatre was familiarly styled *old Dives*, with his back to the wall, and leaning upon his cane, sat frowning in a corner. It was not a situation that called for speech; our salutations were like those at a funeral. I took a chair, and sat observing the manner and the look of Kemble. Nothing could be more natural than for Mrs. Kemble to feel and think of their *personal* loss in this dreadful calamity. Her husband, I am convinced, while I saw him, never thought of *himself* at all. His mind was rather raised than dejected, and his imagination distended with the pictured detail of all the treasures, that had perished in the conflagration. At length he broke out in exclamation, which I have preserved as characteristic of his turn of mind.

" Yes, it has perished, that magnificent theatre, " which for all the purposes of exhibition or com- " fort was the first in Europe. It is gone, with all " its treasures of every description, and some which " can never be replaced. That LIBRARY, which " contained all those immortal productions of our " countrymen, prepared for the purposes of repre- " sentation! That vast collection of MUSIC, com- " posed by the greatest geniuses in that science, — " by Handel, Arne, and others; — most of it ma- " nuscript, in the original score! That WARDROBE, " stored with the costumes of all ages and nations, " accumulated by unwearied research, and at in- " credible expense! SCENERY, the triumph of the " art, unrivalled for its accuracy, and so exquisitely " finished, that it might be the ornament of your " drawing-rooms, were they only large enough to " contain it! Of all this vast treasure nothing now " remains, but the ARMS of ENGLAND over the en- " trance of the theatre — and the ROMAN EAGLE " standing *solitary* in the market place!"

Soon after this Lord Mountjoy, I think, and other friends, called upon them, and among the topics of consolation, his Lordship turned his attention to the general sympathy that would certainly be excited by such a loss. Indeed, said he, the world in general are highly sensible of what you have done for the stage. It will be but *gratitude* in the people to compensate your loss. Mr. Kemble, with great ardour and quickness, turned himself

round, and thus noticed the expression: — "*Gra-*
"*titude*, my Lord! the gratitude of the world and
"the people! My Lord, CHRIST was *crucified*;
"DE WIT was *assassinated*: so much for the world
"and the people!"

There could be no doubt about the instances he gave. The agitated and impetuous feeling of the moment will perhaps excuse ONE of the allusions — besides, that it was *essential* the Saviour should suffer, for a world that, be it remembered, HE thought *worthy* of so great a sacrifice. And whatever may be said, and truly said, of the gratitude of the world and the people, Mr. Kemble soon had the unspeakable delight to find, that there were individuals, who felt even the deepest interest in his merits and his misfortune.

Would I could be more particular in alluding to the munificent conduct of the FIRST PERSON in the realm! — the *delicacy* with which the aid was given, the princely charm, which secured its reception! The terms which his Royal Highness had the condescension to use, written with his own hand, I could wish to be at liberty to make public; but I refrain, from the respect I bear to the illustrious giver, and my deference to the decision of my invaluable friend.

It was on this occasion, that his Grace the late Duke of Northumberland wrote to Mr. Kemble, and after expressing his concern for the accident that had befallen him, assured him that he had not

forgotten his readiness in attending to a request which he had formerly made to him; and that if the use of such a sum as ten thousand pounds would be any convenience to him, it was entirely at his service upon his simple bond. Mr. Kemble expressed his sensibility for an offer so gracious; but he added that he felt a difficulty in accepting it, arising out of an apprehension, that from the situation of his concerns with the theatre, he might not be so punctual in the payment of the interest upon the loan as it was imperious upon him to be. The Duke answered that he would take care *that* should be made perfectly easy to him, and that his steward should receive his express instructions to that effect. Thus encouraged, Mr. Kemble, with suitable acknowledgments, accepted the loan, and signed a bond for its repayment, bearing simple interest, until the principal should be discharged.

The occasion on which Mr. Kemble was conceived by his great patron to have obliged him, was the giving a few lessons in elocution to Lord Percy, at his Grace's desire, intimated to him through his friend Dr. Raine of the Charter-house. At first the doctor spoke of it, without *naming* the nobleman for whom he applied to him; and Mr. Kemble said, however flattered by the implied compliment, that, from a want of sufficient leisure, he must respectfully decline the proposal. Dr. Raine said he regretted the refusal, as the Duke of

Northumberland would be greatly disappointed: "Stop, doctor," said Mr. Kemble, "the Duke of "NORTHUMBERLAND has a right to *command me :*" and then informing his friend of the kindness of the Duke to him, when he was in the York company, he readily conceded the object requested. He accordingly attended Lord Percy.

One day, when he was talking to me of his Grace's goodness to him, I asked him what aid he had been so happy as to render to the young nobleman? His answer was— "Lord Percy is a very ac- "complished speaker; he needed no assistance from "me. However, in obedience to his Grace, we "read occasionally together; but the aid I gave, "if any was given, was to point to Lord Percy's "attention something as to the presentment of the "person, when addressing a numerous assembly; "and I added some hints as to the management of "the voice, so as at all times to be distinctly heard, "and without exhaustion of the speaker. And in "this part of my art I do flatter myself, that I was "competent to advise him."

Whoever remembers the neatness of Mr. Kemble's articulation, the small volume of his voice, and the address with which he lulled or stifled an almost habitual cough, will be of opinion, that he was an absolute master *indeed* of public delivery; and properly appreciated a very peculiar merit, that must have cost him infinite pains in its attainment.

CHAP. VI.

THE COVENT GARDEN PERFORMERS TAKE REFUGE IN THE HAYMARKET. — THE EXILE. — RAISING OF THE NEW THEATRE. — FOUNDATION LAID BY THE PRINCE OF WALES. — THE DINNER. — MR. KEMBLE. — THE LATE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND. — THE DESTRUCTION BY FIRE ALSO OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE. — PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

AMONG all the evils which attend upon our condition here, it is fortunate that, when once ascertained, the mind of man invariably turns itself to seek for consolation: nor is this relief confined to the expectation or the hope of GOOD, but often springs from a conviction that what has really befallen us might have been even yet more severe.

Something like this, I know, did strike the proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre, when the effect of their first shock a little subsided. The sum recovered on the policies of insurance was, I think, 44,500*l.*, itself no inconsiderable part of a fund by which to commence another building. Calamity, too, gives a claim upon the liberal, more promptly obeyed than the call of unsuffering speculation.

Mr. Harris knew one side of the Theatre to be unsound, and he was confident that in a very few years the proprietors must have raised a new pile exclusively from their own funds.

What, therefore, ultimately remained, that admitted only the palliative of time, was the miserable loss of lives by the over hardihood at the great piazza door. The *commercial* character of the concern, to speak the language of business, was high. The proprietors of this theatre were men to be relied on. They could easily have raised twice the sum they *did*, and it would have been better for them to have done so.

Mr. Kemble turned himself to the task of preparation with great method and invincible application. The hospitable roof of the Opera-House was once again his shelter, and the sliding partitions being removed, the boxes were soon rendered even comfortable to the dramatic visitor. By the 26th of the same month, only six days after their conflagration, the Covent Garden company performed Douglas in the King's Theatre. After *God save the King*, which implies, in England, the salvation of every thing valuable, Mr. Kemble came forward to address the people, who received him with almost rapturous applause. After apologizing for any imperfection in his thanks, imputable to the full sense of all their favours to him, he proceeded to inform them that the proprietors had not even delayed the performance of their duty to the humble talents by

which they were surrounded — they had supplied the pressing wants of the workmen in their employ, while they were busied in the arrangements to resume their place among the amusements of the town. He then laid before them the necessity for their indulgence in the exhibition of our native drama in the theatre of Italian Opera; but assured them daily progress would be made in bettering the provision *there*, while they immediately set about the erection of a new theatre worthy of the Metropolis, and in which their hope was to be ready to receive the public by next September.

Even in their disaster they were too strong to fear competition. The other house had no prominent feature but Mrs. Jordan, and was overwhelmed with its embarrassments. To show, however, something as to the entire destitution of Covent Garden Theatre at this time, I one morning met Mr. Kemble, who said to me — "Shew me where Mrs. "Bland lodges, and come and help me to persuade "her." We were close to the door; she was at home, and we went up to her. "My dear," said Mr. Kemble, "we are going to do *As You Like It*, "and Ware (the leader) can manage pretty well as "to the rest of the music, but he can't get the air "you sing in the last act, 'Good Duke, receive "thy Daughter' — one of Arne's, of which we *had* "the score." So, she said, "Dear me, I have it "not; beside if I had, it would only be the voice "part, and then what would you do for the orches-

"tra?" "Why, if you will note the *song* down "for us," said the manager, "Ware can put the "harmony to it; if not Arne's, near enough to pass "for the occasion." This the really kind creature said she would do with all her heart, and after a few complimentary expressions we took our leave.

They did, indeed, *daily* augment their provisions of scenery and decoration; for by the 7th of Oct. they brought forth a new melodrama, called The Forest of Hermanstadt, in which Liston was let loose upon *Parissot* and *Deshayes*, and stept forth at once the farcical *dieu de la danse*. Mrs. H. Johnston became even popular now, by the beauty of her attitudes and the loveliness of her expression. This was a compression of Skeffington's *Mysterious Bride*, by T. Dibdin, who produced a very interesting piece in two acts.

Reynolds in the mean time had read the enchanting romance of Madame Cottin, called *Elizabeth*, which he dramatised under the title of *The Exile;* and it was first acted with infinite splendor at the Opera-house, on the 10th of November. The effect of it was prodigious — it has been a fortune at every distinct revival on our stage, and its procession was both graceful and elegant. The long peregrination of the daughter lost much of its pathos in the *shifting* of stage scenery — it is "as fleet as "a glance of the mind." The remembrance of the romance was absolutely needed for the *interest* of the heroine. Here again Mrs. Johnston was

fortunate in being cast into Alexine; and for state and majesty few empresses, even of the stage, could compete with the towering grandeur of Mrs. St. Leger.

Pope was now again with the Covent Garden manager; and to show the total want of management at the other house, they had allowed Kemble to possess himself of Young also; so that tragedy could really be acted nowhere else. He performed Daran with characteristic ardour, and the Exile, perhaps, has equalled the attraction even of Pizarro. But the combination of talent was extreme — Reynolds had persuasion equal to his tact, and secured the further aid of Mrs. Dickons and Incledon, and Munden, and Fawcett, and Liston. And this is no trifling art in the preparation of an author's triumph.

The grand incident, rushing into the sovereign's presence, reminded the critics of Mr. Colman and his *Africans*. How *enviable* was the lot of Madame Cottin on this occasion, who *really* invented the situation!

Mr. Robert Smirke, jun. was selected to be the architect of the new Theatre Royal; and the anticipation of classical structure was carefully kept awake by reports of his travels and his taste, and his peculiar study of theatres. The site of the new *play-house*, (if such a word still remain in our language,) was somewhat *extended* — a circumstance afterwards affecting a legal covenant; — some adja-

cent houses were bought, so as to open the area: the architect might have surrounded the house by a colonade, and facilitated the departure of the spectators by stair-cases of considerable width, and doors to be open only at the close of the amusement. He did not choose such a plan; but loaded his design with a bleak, a barren, and portentous portico, and strengthened his walls, as though they were bound to resist every thing but the "crack of "doom." So solid an edifice required funds to no mean amount even in the outset, and 50,000*l.* in 500*l.* shares, were subscribed in a very few days. They secured a *deposit* of 40 per cent., and the remainder was conveniently enough arranged; the whole, with 44,500*l.* from the fire-offices, was to be paid into the banking-house of Stephenson, Batson, and Co., there to be expressly and solely appropriated to the erection, and completion, and furnishing of the new theatre. The most costly materials were always chosen; the proprietors seemed never to recollect their *personal* responsibility for every thing — they were building a *temple* and a *palace*, as if it had been voted by the people of England, and their representatives had constituted them the committee of taste for its erection.

The 30th of December was the day devoted to the ceremony of laying the first stone of the building. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was present on the occasion; and deputations from the Masonic Lodges in town assembled at Freemasons'

Tavern to meet their grand master. A merely *nominal* alliance may be better than none: whatever union might once have existed between the *symbol* and its *subject*, the *free* and the *real* MASON, I presume at the present day, unless the *architect* should condescend to be a *mason*, few members of the craft know a triglyph from a metope. I have never presumed to enter the Hall of Mystery in Queen Street, and therefore, as Gibbon observes of Virgil, in reference to the *Eleusinian* mysteries*, "Should "it appear probable, that I had no opportunity of "*learning* the SECRET, it will be something *more* "than probable, that I shall not reveal what I "never knew."

The whole of the proceedings were under the direction of Mr. Kemble, who paid every possible attention, as well to the accommodation of those who were admitted to see the formalities, as to the ceremony itself. The streets surrounding the theatre were lined by the Life Guards, and detachments of infantry were placed in situations to

* On this subject even the wonderful reading of Gibbon, in his reply to Warburton, left his argument unsatisfactory. It was not necessary for Virgil to be *initiated* in the mysteries of Ceres to make them a subject of his poem. In the letters of Cicero to Atticus, he seconds the entreaties of his friend CHILIUS, the *poet*, to send to him an account of these very rites. They were, therefore, no doubt, ready for the *poetical* use of VIRGIL, without either the trouble of *initiation*, or sustaining personally the *anathema* of Horace. "Chilius te rogat, et ego "ejus rogatu Ευμολπιδων πατρια." CIC. Gronov. p. 858.

secure a facility of access to the doors of admission, and keep off the crowd. Covered platforms were raised within the interior of the building, for the accommodation of the spectators, and an open platform, from the grand entrance in Bow-street to the north-east part of the building, where the stone was laid, was railed off, and the flooring covered with green cloth, bordered with crimson, directing the progress of the masonic brethren to the spot where the ceremony was to take place. At the north-east extremity of this platform, in a raised gallery, were placed the bands of the Life Guards, and of the Coldstream; and at the opposite side of the platform, the Duke of York's band was stationed, and played alternately the most admired martial pieces. A marquee was also erected, provided with refreshments; and a covered way built up for the masons to retire to in case of rain. The grenadier companies of the Foot Guards were stationed at the grand entrance door; flags were hoisted at the four corners of the building, and about forty Life Guards, who were masons, lined the space along which the procession was to pass. The company began to assemble as early as ten o'clock, and before twelve the seats were occupied with elegant females, the gentlemen standing on a raised platform behind them. The other parts of the stage erected for public accommodation, were also crowded, and the workmen employed upon the

building were placed on scaffolds at a greater distance.

Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, the latter of whom was made a mason only on the preceding evening, both wearing the insignia of masons, received his Royal Highness as he alighted from his carriage, and conducted him to the marquee, where the grand officers were waiting his arrival, the band playing the Grenadier's March. The Prince was accompanied by the Duke of Sussex, the only branch of the royal family who was a mason except his Royal Highness, and Earl Moira, as deputy grand master. Colonel Bloomfield, one of his Royal Highness's household, was also of the party, dressed in the old uniform.

The company all rose as his Royal Highness passed along the platform, the gentlemen remained uncovered, and the workmen gave three cheers, the band playing, "God save the King." A royal salute of twenty-one guns was then fired from carronades placed in the building, and the upper part of the stone was raised for the purpose of the ceremony.

After the Prince had passed a short time with the grand officers and others in the marquee, he came forward, uncovered, and prepared to lay the stone. The grand treasurer of the superior lodge deposited a bronze box, containing divers coins and medals of the King's reign, in the cavity of the foundation stone; and the cement being prepared,

the Prince, as Grand Master, spread the same abroad with his silver trowel, and the stone, weighing upwards of three tons, was then let down, the bands continuing to play a martial air. The senior and junior wardens, and the Deputy Grand Master, the Earl of Moira, having severally presented his Royal Highness with the plumb, the level, and the square, and the Prince having applied them to the fabric, and, pronouncing the work correct, he gave the stone *three* knocks with his mallet, and the ceremony of placing the stone was finished.

Three cups were then given to his Royal Highness, containing corn, wine, and oil, which he scattered and poured upon the stone; then placing a plan of the building in the hands of Mr. Smirke, the architect, he desired him to complete the structure, according to that plan. His Royal Highness then turning to Mr. Harris and Mr. Kemble, wished prosperity to the building, and the objects connected with it, and success and happiness to the proprietors and managers. The ceremony being finished, the band played Rule Britannia, and the Prince, the Duke of Sussex, and Earl Moira, were escorted back to the Prince's carriage, by the managers and the grand officers, under a second salute of 21 guns.

The brothers of the masonic lodges then returned to their hall, in Queen Street, and the grand lodge was closed, after making a formal minute of the proceedings. Sir John Eamer and Mr. Alder-

man Newnham were among the grand officers. The Prince looked extremely well, and wore the insignia of Grand Master of the masons. The Duke of Sussex also appeared in good health and spirits, and walked side by side with his royal brother. The servants of the Prince wore their full dress liveries, and he was attended by the gentlemen of his household, in the same way as when he goes to court.

Among the articles deposited in the box, inclosed in the foundation, was a gold medal, stating, in Latin, that George, Prince of Wales, laid the foundation of the theatre with his own hand; and on the reverse is a bust of his Royal Highness, and the year 1808. Also another medal, of the same size, of copper, with the following inscription:

Under the auspices of
His most sacred Majesty, George III.
King of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland,
The Foundation Stone of the Theatre, Covent Garden,
Was laid by his Royal Highness
George Prince of Wales,
M.DCCCVIII.

On the reverse is:

Robert Smirke, Architect.

Amidst the multitude who attended, it was impossible to distinguish individuals, though there were many persons of distinction present. Almost all the actors and actresses were there.

Mrs. Siddons looked extremely well, and wore a

large plume of black feathers. She expressed a great deal of anxiety for her brother, Mr. Kemble, who, from having been confined to his chamber for above a month, came forward upon the occasion, accommodating his dress to the ceremony, and stood bare-headed under the rain.

Mr. Kemble was indefatigable in his exertions; he was full dressed in blue and white, with white silk stockings. Mr. Smirke, the architect, and Mr. Copeland, the builder, were also present.

The houses in the streets adjoining the theatre were crowded to the roof tops; and notwithstanding many thousands were collected on the outside, I did not hear of a single accident.

The proprietors and their friends on this great day dined together; and Mr. Kemble rose with the most grateful emotion to address them. He held in his hand a paper, which had been that moment delivered to him from His Grace the Duke of Northumberland. It noticed the business of the day as rendering it one of the proudest in Mr. Kemble's life, and conveyed his Grace's determination to make it one of the *happiest;* and as no doubt the joy of all concerned would demand and justify a bonfire on the occasion, he begged that Mr. Kemble would use the enclosed (his bond for 10,000*l.* *cancelled*) to *light* the *pile.*

In the accounts that have been given of this transaction, Mr. Kemble is made, with the utmost regularity, to pay the interest as the *quarters* be-

came due; and the world may properly give my friend the credit of doing, to the *syllable*, every thing that ought to be done upon such an occasion. But as the writers themselves very accurately state, that the loan took effect soon after the burning of the theatre on the 20th of September 1808, and the bond itself was returned cancelled on the 31st of December of the same year, it is certain that the noble Duke did not permit any vast exercise of Mr. Kemble's punctuality, as the *quarters* became due.

The act itself is one of those proud things in the history of a great family, which evince the mighty power of hereditary character and hereditary wealth. The nobleman, who thus distinguished Mr. Kemble, lived to receive the written expression of his sensibility and his gratitude. The *fame* of such beneficence is of vast importance to mankind; inasmuch as it *ensures*, from every DESCENDANT of the house of PERCY, the liberal *use* of that opulence, which is not merely a possession, but a trust, — to be inherited only with honour, as it is dispensed with joy.

The cloud which had been cast over the theatrical world seemed at length to be breaking away; and although the full magnificence of Holland's design, as to Drury Lane Theatre, had been stinted by insufficient means, yet it was expected NOW, that its exterior would in some way be completed, so as to put it more upon a level with the classical

pile, which Mr. Smirke was to erect on the site of the old theatre in Covent Garden. But it was THEN only to be on a level with its rival by a similar destruction.

It may hardly be worth the notice, but the fact is unquestionable, that there will be always, among the sour spirits of our sectarists, many who look upon all elegant amusements as vanities, and upon theatres as the most pernicious of the tribe. To such persons the destruction of a play-house betokens the vengeance of an incensed Deity, and they point with very solemn triumph to the ruins of a profane and dissolute temple. The fate of Covent Garden, I remember, led them to some expressions, which seemed to *threaten* as well as prophecy — and it was currently said, that the *other* Belial would soon be grovelling in the dust. Every consideration, however, seemed to call upon the persons about Drury Lane Theatre for extreme vigilance and care. In the month of September 1808, they had been assiduously employed on their roof, to guard their *own* Apollo from the fiery flakes that fell in showers from the burning theatre so nigh at hand. As details came to be known of the progress of this calamity, they learned that no *water* could be had for a long while to supply the engines, the main having *just at this time* been cut off for the purpose of laying down new pipes. Covent Garden, it was supposed, was destroyed from the wadding of a musket fired in Pizarro,

which being discharged upwards, had been driven deeply into some combustible substances, and there at length kindled into blaze the fuel which surrounded it.

What is the inference from all this? Why, that accident, if it occurred, would never surprise them *unprepared*. The utmost vigilance would be used that no *risk* should be run; — workmen would not be left entirely to *themselves*, whether sober or otherwise; and if on the stage a double care was taken to point the fire-arms, or they blew off, with the customary stench, a little harmless powder only, to startle the gentler part of their spectators, they would not *therefore* think themselves at liberty to abandon spacious apartments of the house communicating with the boxes to the liquid flames of *varnish*, which either carelessness might leave to their natural effect, or malice secretly direct to the destruction of the building. But if even this were so, and the ample sweep of the audience portion of the building *took fire*, some persons should have been in the way, to be apprized either by *smoke*, or *noise*, or *light*, of what was at work around them. The *iron curtain* should have been ready, to secure *one* half of the pile from the flames; and the *reservoir* on the roof at least *not empty*, and ready to pour its streams of water upon the burning circles of the other half.

I do not therefore wonder that, with no more

interval for carelessness to grow to its height than five short months, there should be found HUNDREDS of calm and observing persons, who utterly refused to credit the alleged cause of the fire when it happened, and persisted in the opinion, that Drury Lane Theatre perished by *design*, and design with *perfect science* to aid it. "If," says a cotemporary writer, "it had been a night of performance, and "the flames had spread with the same rapidity, "many hundreds must have perished." The flames *could not* have spread with the same rapidity; for an *excessive* fire could not have been made in the coffee-room by *workmen*. The usual *tea-makers* would have been there; and no more fire in the stove than sufficed to boil the water. But he goes on: "If it can be believed that this "was the work of some basely interested or mali- "cious incendiary, the time chosen, (a Friday in "Lent,) appears to shew a feeling of *conscience* "even in such a villain; if not, we have only a "further, though needless confirmation, that, as in "the *fall of a sparrow*, so in the most awful scenes "of waste, 'there is a Providence.'"

This is a dark and inscrutable subject. The short-sighted *humanity* or *justice*, given to us for guides, might humbly suggest, that if special intervention were deigned in such a case, PROPERTY might have been saved as well as LIVES, by a sudden effect either upon the *mind* or *hand* of the

incendiary, and all the long train of evils averted, which fell so heavily upon the dependents on the theatre. But let us look to the event.

The Circassian Bride, and the Unconscious Counterfeit, were advertised for the performances of Saturday the 25th. It being Lent, no performance took place on the 24th. After a strict investigation, it was generally believed, that this melancholy catastrophe was occasioned by accident. It appeared that the stove in the upper coffee-room was of slight construction, for the mere purpose of accommodating the customers of the evening with water for tea, &c., and quite surrounded with *woodwork*. * In this stove the workmen, who had been employed during the day, had made a much larger fire † than it was customary to make there, the remains of which were left in it at four o'clock, and it was reasonable to suppose, had communicated to the surrounding woodwork, and that the fire had been gaining strength ‡ from that time to the moment of its bursting forth.

* A fire-place, in a *theatre* too, surrounded with *woodwork!*

† "A much *larger* fire." Who states this? If the *workmen*, why leave it *in* at four o'clock, since it was no longer needed? —If the *servants* of the house, who remarked it as extraordinary, why did not they *watch* it or *extinguish* it?

‡ *From that time to the, &c.* — That is, from *four* o'clock to *eleven* at night, *seven hours*; during which the fire was left to *go out* or *destroy*, and no one creature in the building was near the room, to know how these workmen had *left* the combustible articles they were using, and *known* to be using!

In less than a quarter of an hour from that time, the fire spread in one unbroken flame over the whole of the immense pile, extending from Brydges-street to Drury Lane; so that the pillar of fire was not less than 450 feet in breadth. In a very few minutes all that part of the theatre, together with the front row of boxes, was on fire, and the rapidity of the flames was such, that before twelve o'clock the whole of the interior was one blaze. The theatre was at this time left to its fate, and the appearance was tremendously grand. Never before did I behold so immense a body of flame; and the occasional explosions that took place, were awful beyond description. The interior was completely destroyed by one o'clock. Some of the houses partially caught fire in Russel-street, but the engines, with a plentiful supply of water, continued to play on those contiguous to the theatre. The advantage of having a great public structure of this kind in an insulated situation, was apparent upon this awful and melancholy occasion. Although the engines could not arrest the progress of the flames in the theatre, they were able to play upon the surrounding buildings, and thus saved the neighbourhood from destruction. Neither the burning of Covent Garden Theatre, nor the late fire at St. James's Palace, could be compared in terrific grandeur with this conflagration. The Thames appeared like a sheet of fire.

At three o'clock the flames had nearly subsided:

that once magnificent structure presented to the view nothing but an immense heap of ruins; and at five o'clock the flames were completely subdued.

Of the immense property of all sorts, in scenery, machinery, dresses, decorations, music, instruments, plays, &c. of which nothing was saved, no estimate can be formed. It was insured for the exact following sums:

Imperial - - -	£13,500
Hope - - - -	10,000
Eagle - - - -	6,500
British - - - -	5,000
	£35,000

The whole of this insurance has been *attached* in the different offices by His Grace the Duke of Bedford, the ground landlord, &c. The treasury having a party wall, was unhurt, and but for the injudicious zeal of some of the assistants, in opposition to the better judgment of Mr. Peake, none of the books or papers would have been lost — *that* loss, however, was not of very great moment, since *all the accounts are now closed.* The whole of the property of Mrs. Jordan, and some belonging to Messrs. Matthews and Decamp, were the only things saved. All the splendid furniture that formerly ornamented the dwelling of Mr. Sheridan, when Treasurer of the Navy, (the fruits of office,)

were destroyed. Mr. Phillips, who resides in Cross-court, Russel-court, gave the first alarm at the stage door. Not a single life was lost.

The plan of the late theatre included an area of upwards of 320 feet in length, by 155 in breadth, and the height of the building, measuring from the substratum to the roof, was 118 feet. On the 5th of March 1794, Mr. Fox brought up a petition in the House of Commons from Mr. Sheridan, in behalf of himself and the other proprietors, praying certain powers to clear the avenues of the theatre for the accommodation of the public. The petition was referred to a committee, and the intended improvements were incomplete when the edifice sunk in flames.* The front in Brydges-street was to have been ornamented by buildings, containing a coffee-house, tavern, library, shops of various sorts, and residences for the performers. According to the plan, it would have been one of the most complete theatres in Europe, and worthy the British capital; but it fell before it reached perfection. The ornaments of the house had a rich effect, and at the same time a simplicity which gratified the

* On the night of the conflagration, I stood, with my boots covered by the water, in the middle of the street, until I saw the *figure* on the summit of the house sink into the flames; *that* APOLLO which a contemptible *vanity* had thrust up into the place, that, in England, should always be occupied by SHAKSPEARE: — to whose honour, moreover, be it remembered, the pile, on its erection, *professed* itself to be consecrated.

eye, without reducing the effect of the stage decorations. The drop scene was considered by artists a rare production of architectural design. The building of this theatre cost 129,000*l.* The debts upon it amounted to 300,000*l.* The situation of all concerned was dreadful in the extreme. Mr. Sheridan experienced on this calamitous occasion the sympathy of the House of Commons; but he must have called up no vulgar philosophy to sustain him. Men carry their veneration for genius a great way; but for such a person as Mr. Sheridan to struggle with the *old* debt, incur a *new* one, and *rebuild* his theatre, was utterly impossible. His habits had rendered confidence, at least, no *commercial* failing.

The performers in the mean time no longer "rejoicing in their matchless chief," met to consider what was to be done for *themselves*. — Here were some hundreds of ingenious persons fitted for their work, with their *factory* in ruins, and their employers reduced to beggary. Thus matters stood till the 1st of March, when Mr. Sheridan *resigned all controul over the ladies and gentlemen of the late establishment, and with his good wishes left them to their fortune*. Perhaps "the tears resided in an onion," that on the part of the performers "watered this sorrow." They were not suffered long to indulge the feeling, whatever it was; for THREE HOURS after this, he sent them word, that "*he would re-*

main with them, and *that they must provide for him and his son Tom.*"

They utterly refused to receive him, and settled upon endeavouring to procure a licence from the Lord Chamberlain for *themselves*. This was a great deal too *loose* a scheme; the performers could hardly have *considered* its unavoidable results. Condemning their former governor to exist upon his *wits*, might not strike them as imposing upon HIM any calamity without due preparation — He had done this all his life. But that the PROPRIETORS of the theatre — the RENTERS, — the CREDITORS, should for 300,000*l.*, absolutely lost, solicit no attention from the government; that they should assemble amid their *own* ruins, and, in tender recollection, contentedly carry away each of them a brick as a specimen and a relic, — was too much to expect from any set of people who looked to their own interest. Accordingly, when the Actors waited upon the Lord Chamberlain, even so early as at *ten* o'clock in the morning, they found that Mr. Sheridan had been there *before* them, and they had something to endure very like reproach, that they could think of such a violent and selfish usurpation of the rights of others. But let me do them justice; they did not mean to slip by a LICENCE into the possession of the PATENT, and snatch from the great sufferers all hope of future benefit; they wanted THEN, at that moment of extreme and miserable

need, to give bread to the retainers of the establishment under *three pounds* per week; and if they should be allowed to act at the Lyceum, the receipts of which could be but moderate, they then had resolved constantly to pay in *full all* such salaries, and suffer a deduction to be made from those of the higher performers, who could struggle better for themselves, and were *contented to do so*.

There was something in this that struck the Lord Chamberlain; the urgency, too, was extreme, and he granted the performers his licence to act *three nights*, for their own *particular* benefit, at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Mr. Taylor, it was understood, *gave* them his shelter, — I believe he charged them only the actual expences incurred — for they had his *corps de ballet*, as well as his house, and they ventured to infringe a little upon play-house prices. On these nights the public with cheerfulness gave 7*s.* in the boxes, 5*s.* in the pit, and 2*s.* 6*d.* in the gallery. On these three nights upwards of 2,200*l.* was taken at the doors. They did not suffer this timely aid to shrink away by *peculation* — they knew well the mysteries of door-keepers and check-takers; persons some how beyond *all* check, and the "heart of whose mystery" seems, like the soul of the "brethren three" in Spenser, to be regularly transferred at *departure*. They therefore, in succession, received the money and checked themselves; and were enabled, literally, to give *bread* to the starving. They obtained

at the same theatre, three nights more from Mr. Taylor's liberality; but on the 11th of April, they opened at the Lyceum, and continued, by permission of the Lord Chamberlain, to act there to the 10th of June. The six nights at the Opera-house had the distinction given by the talents of Mrs. Siddons, on the 3d of April, in Lady Randolph, and on the 10th by those of Madame Catalani, in *Semiramide*. On the latter occasion, there was an overflow, that swept away all bars and bolts, and checks and their receivers. The *charity* of the public, to hear Madame Catalani, on this occasion, is said, in very numerous instances, to have forgotten the usual *donation* at the door.

It only remains for me to state that, upon some remarkable depreciation in the 500*l.* shares of this theatre *after the fire*, the unfortunate holders being contented to *take* whatever they could get, — a public advertisement, from the PROPRIETORS, recommended them to be *cool;* and to be assured, that every *endeavour* towards a just and equitable arrangement with them would *precede* any attempt towards rebuilding the theatre. Some of them, I believe, became *quite* cold before that astonishing event.

CHAP. VII.

BUILDING OF THE NEW THEATRE. — ITS EXTERIOR. — REMARKS. — INTERIOR. — THREATENED STORM AS TO NEW PRICES. — THE O. P. RIOT.—THE DINNER. — THE STAGE. —TERMINATION OF THE CONTEST.

From the destruction of the one theatre the mind recovers something of its elasticity in contemplating the rapid erection of the other. The excavations for the foundation began about the end of November. The last day of the year witnessed the ceremony of laying the foundation stone, and the whole building was finished on the 18th of September 1809.

To accomplish this rapid task with the security that was equally essential in the work, horse-mills were erected to grind the lime and prepare the mortar — *that*, too, was used immediately in a hot state, to prevent any interruption from frost, and courses of Yorkshire stone, at every interval of four feet in height, were worked into the walls, to render them sufficiently strong.

The whole of the roof, by the dexterous employment of machinery, was raised and fixed in one

month; it was nearly 100 feet in length, and 130 feet in width; every principal pair of rafters sustained, by calculation, a weight of 30 tons.

The outside of the theatre rests upon an area of about 220 feet in length, and 170 in breadth. The only insulation that merits the name is on the eastern side, Bow-street, and the western of Prince's Place. A fire in Hart-street, with a north wind to assist it, must do great injury to the theatre, even if they were speedily supplied with water. The Bedford avenue is gloomy, and would be ineffectual as to danger from the south.

There is, externally, not a particle of taste — a heavy portico of four doric columns, the largest in any modern building, astonishes by its ponderous inutility; the columns are 5 feet 6 inches in diameter. The doric, it should be observed, was the earliest of the three orders properly Grecian — the enormous thickness of the column diminished with the refinement of art, and the accomplished Corinthian consummated the invention of the Greeks.

We are told that the Bow-street front is an imitation of the Temple of Minerva in the Acropolis. Partially it may be; but it has no interior columns — no point of sight from which it can be viewed, or its proportions discerned. The lower part of the builing is of stone, the upper of cement very dingy, and liable to scale off or crack. Referring to the archetype, the ornaments on the tympanum

and frieze are omitted, so are those on the corners of the pediment.

Men are so liable to be carried away by a catch-word:—mention *freedom*, and they seem to think all *curb* unnecessary.—Talk of the *classic*, and they do not think of *utility*, and never even ask whether *theatres*, among the ancients, bore the external form of *temples*. Here everything was consequently to be *classical*. The greater part of the *bas reliefs* in front are quite unintelligible, except to the artist and the antiquary — Minerva, the Muses, Apollo, Bacchus, the Eumenides — Eschylus, Sophocles, Euripides. Even the modern drama has too much classic tendency — for Milton is our *epic*, not dramatic, wonder, and Comus and Agonistes belong to the Grecian drama.

It is true we have Shakspeare in the employment of his preternatural power; he calls forth the inhabitants of his enchanted Isle; but would himself probably wonder that the triformed Hecate, in her car drawn by oxen, followed by Lady Macbeth with the daggers, and her husband turning away from the murdered Duncan, should be the *sole* evidences of the English genius for the STAGE; and he might now venture to enquire whether all his *comedies* had perished, and if they had, whether nothing of BEN JONSON, or FLETCHER, or MASSINGER survived, to fill so great a chasm? One might suppose him to imagine, that even the *successors* of our greatest dramatists merited some place among the

reliefs of an English theatre; and that DRYDEN, and CONGREVE, and FARQUHAR and VANBRUGH, as they could fill the *interior* occasionally, merited some little attention on the *outside* of an English play-house.

As to the two Muses of the drama, MELPOMENE, though not discriminated as to attitude from the common figure of Melancholy, he would, perhaps, think sufficiently *attributed:* — the other figure, with the shepherd's crook, or *pedum*, on her right shoulder, he might refer to his classical friend BEN; and upon being assured by him, that all was *correct*, with a gracious *smile* of deference, contentedly receive it for COMEDY.

The halls and stair-cases of this theatre, its lobbies and saloons, are really wretched, when compared with the contrivances of Wyatt at Drury-Lane; and to allow such a clownish exhibition as the long unmeaning figure, *called* Shakspeare, to remain where it stands a single night, proves nothing, but that the managers of the house must pass always by it as *rapidly* as the people do.

In speaking of it as a play-house, its highest excellence was the stage itself, constructed by Mr. Saul; certainly the most perfect with which I am acquainted. In the audience part of the building some positive improvements claim to be stated.

The boxes were calculated to hold as many people as they did in the former theatre; only, from the encroachment of the private circle, now

occupying the whole of the third tier, 140 persons were accommodated in the lower circles. Six feet six inches were now the average depth of the three rows, which had been only six feet three inches in the old theatre, and but six feet in Drury Lane.

The pit had still its former *twenty* seats, but the declivity, instead of being, as formerly, only three feet, was now four feet nine inches.

In the two-shilling gallery of Drury Lane a person seated in the back row was one hundred feet from the stage-door; in the old Covent Garden he was eighty-eight feet, and in the present only eighty-six. In the upper gallery these relative distances were one hundred and four feet, ninety-three feet, and eighty-five feet.

The house *was* lighted by glass chandeliers in front of each circle — 270 wax-candles was the nightly supply: 300 patent lamps lighted the stage and its scenery. The prevailing colour of the house was white; the ornament, gold upon a light pink ground; the box doors were all of solid mahogany.

The first and second circles of the boxes were appropriated to the public. From the third circle they were entirely excluded — the boxes here were let annually, and each of them had a small anti-room about six feet wide, opening outwards into a general saloon, appropriated to these renters, as that below was to the public. To these boxes the entrances were private.

In a commercial concern, like the building of a new theatre, men who bring forward a large capital, or what is the same thing, burthen themselves with a long and heavy debt, may be excused for any sanguine hope of reimbursement arising out of an invidious and dangerous distinction. The annual property in boxes at the Opera is tolerated for the comfort of those who alone are competent to such an enjoyment: but even there no separation exists from the public at large — whoever pays at the pit-door may then range at will among the circles of our nobility, whose boxes only contain the requisite number of chairs, without anti-rooms, which fancy can fill with profligacy unseen, and without what was *really* an objection, (for the immorality was a pretence,) the absolute seclusion of a PRIVILEGED ORDER from all *vulgar contact.*

The *necessity* of the actors, who had been burnt out of the rival theatre had led them to ask 7*s.* for their boxes in the Opera-house for six representations — it was given by the public cheerfully and graciously. A critical friend of mine expressed a hope, "that this would not be drawn into a *prece-* "*dent.*" The proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, demonstrated that they could only be reimbursed for their enormous outlay, by a rise in the prices, which would place the boxes at seven shillings, the pit at four, leaving the still far distant galleries at the old rates of two shillings and one.

Enough had transpired of their intentions to excite a vast deal of displeasure among our young men, who commonly use the theatres as their evening relaxation. My professional habits at this time led me to be almost daily in the public offices; where, as a man of business, who had once written for the stage, and whose intimacy with Mr. Kemble was well known, many very respectable persons in those offices would frequently exceed the usual official intercourse, and ask my opinions relative to the theatre and its concerns.

I found that a great proportion of their body was decidedly opposed to the new scheme; and I saw a prospect of annoyance, such as made me tremble for my friends. I told Mr. Kemble what I knew; but he smiled at my terrors — and so late as two o'clock on the day of opening, I saw him in Bow-street, quite perpendicular and confident, with a heap of papers under his arm, which he was himself going to deliver at the offices of our journals; the *feelings* of which, as might be imagined, referred to *politics* rather than to plays — the tory newspapers advocating the *new prices*, and the whig or radical invariably the *old*.

On the 18th of September, the new theatre, which had been completely finished within nine months, opened with Macbeth, the most attractive tragedy of Shakspeare, and the musical farce of The Quaker.

A slight advance in the price of admission had

been announced in the play-bills, and adequately justified by the proprietors. To obviate a clamour, which assigned the engagement of Madame Catalani as the cause of this advance, it was distinctly affirmed that, had that lady been unknown to the public, the proprietors would have felt themselves compelled to solicit their indulgence as to the rate of admission.

The theatre was soon filled, and the audience took their seats without any striking demonstration of the hostile intentions among them. The orchestra commenced with the national anthem, and God save the King was sung by the whole vocal strength of the theatre. It was attended by the usual tokens of respect from the audience.

Mr. Kemble then made his appearance with the intention of speaking a poetical *address*, upon the opening of the new theatre. As he was, almost immediately after, to re-enter as Macbeth, he appeared in the dress of that character. The sight of him was the *assigned* moment for displaying hostility; and he was saluted by a yell of clamour and execration, which did not allow one line of his *address* to be heard in the body of the house. It spoke, however, of the origin and progress of the drama, and when it arrived at its brightest period, it took credit for the improvements of scenic representation in the following couplet —

> "Thus Shakspeare's fire burns brighter than of yore;
> And may the stage that boasts him *burn no more*."

It ended with no very poetical allusion to the *solidity* of the building, and the *burthen* of its cost; and expressed a hope, that the ardour to raise a nation's *taste* would be repaid by its *liberality*.

The tumult was kept up, whatever performers were upon the stage; but the faction distinguished itself by a peculiar clamour on the appearance of any member of Mr. Kemble's family. They demonstrated their taste, as well as contempt, by standing with their backs turned to the stage, and keeping their hats on during the whole of the performance.

On the termination of these entertainments, two gentlemen appeared upon the stage, who were supposed to be magistrates from the Bow-street office. One of them attempted to speak, but, not being able to obtain the slightest attention, took a paper from his pocket, which was presumed to be the Riot Act. The hisses with which they were saluted induced them, after a short time, to withdraw — but several riotous persons were, by the police, take into custody, and held to bail for their appearance at the ensuing sessions.

I have neither space nor inclination to follow a systematic conspiracy through a continued annoyance of SIXTY-SIX nights. It must have been attended with no inconsiderable expence to its perpetrators; for, besides the price paid on their admission, many thousand hand-bills and placards were printed, in every variety of type; and even

banners painted, sometimes ingenious enough in their designs, but always personal, malignant, or indecent in their inscriptions. Occasional irruptions were made by Townshend and his assistants into the pit — the fortified camp of the assailants; and sometimes, after desperate conflicts, the officers bore away in triumph the standards of the enemy.

Mr. Kemble was a man of very uncommon self-possession, great temper, and power of nerve; but there, and every where, if his opponents were not to be satisfied by *reason*, he was contented to want all other means of carrying his purpose.

When he could make himself heard, during any partial cessation of the clamour, he endeavoured to impress them with certain most unquestionable truths: he told them that, in the reign of Queen Anne, one hundred years ago, the admission to the pit had been *three shillings;* and left to their justice the inference that would naturally arise from the consideration, that every article of their consumption had even prodigiously increased in price. With his characteristic and manly simplicity, he assured them, that the proprietors, for the last ten years, had not received six per cent. for their money; — money too, ventured in a property so fluctuating and precarious; — and this, he added, "I declare to you, upon my honour, I, who would "not tell a LYE for all that this theatre is worth."

The objects of sympathy are naturally various in

a mixed assembly. One sagacious person had stated, that he should not demur, for his own part, to the new arrangements, provided the actors were to benefit by the receipts. It was an easy matter for Mr. Kemble to shew, that the performers of the stage now enjoyed three times the emoluments of their greatest predecessors. On a subsequent occasion he told them, that the proprietors by no means wished to be judges in their own cause; — that they therefore proposed to submit their books to the inspection of a committee, whom it was impossible for them to influence; to consist of the governor of the Bank of England, His Majesty's Attorney and Solicitor General, with the most respectable of our merchants — Mr. Baring, Mr. Angerstein, and others. That such committee, after due investigation, would make a specific report upon the actual state of facts; and this, as it was a criterion from which the proprietors by no means shrunk, so he trusted that it would terminate all disputes upon the subject, and prove a full and perfect satisfaction to the public. He added that, "until this document could be prepared and laid "before them, the theatre must necessarily con- "tinue shut." Indeed this measure was, on every principle, absolutely essential; for even the government could not be indifferent to the nightly resistance of its police, and the defiance of its magistracy; — to the means afforded of disciplining a mob for *popular purposes*, in declared violation of

the law, as it was laid down in the case of Macklin by Lord Mansfield himself. That profound and admirable judge having declared "that any persons "who went to the theatre, night after night, for "the purpose of preventing an actor from exer-"cising his profession, or to injure managers or "proprietors, would not only be subject to an "action at law, but might be indicted for the "offence: and further, that if the parties *concur*, "although not previously acquainted with each "other, it is a CONSPIRACY."

It must be obvious that nothing admitted of easier proof than the *injury* sustained on this occasion; inasmuch as the brutal, the ferocious, and the infamously *indecent* conduct of these rioters, rendered it impossible for its usual frequenters to enter the theatre at all; or, if they did, to receive, what they had a right to expect, the gratification of the drama. That future times may have no doubt as to the indecency to which I have alluded, they may here be told, that the appearance of any LADY in the circle of private boxes became a signal for every unmanly description of insult; — for language, which never, I believe, polluted the lips of any *other* monsters, except those in a neighbouring nation, who assailed with untranslatable filth the unhappy person of Antoinette, and the elegant females of her court.

Those who take a cynical pleasure in surveying human nature in its lowest state of degradation,

(I say lowest state, because it was *voluntary*,) may amuse themselves by contemplating the efficient O.P. rioter, dressing for exhibition in the theatre. He had to pass, though unsearched, at the doors, and to squeeze himself through an iron or wooden hatch, of our usual width, encumbered as he might be with his watchman's rattle, or dustman's bell, or post-boy's horn, or French-horn, or trombone, with a white night-cap in his pocket — his placards of a dozen feet in length wound about his body, and his bludgeon for close action with the enemy. He had to practise his O.P. dance, and rave himself as hoarse as a night coachman in winter — he, at the hazard of his limbs, had to make the central *rush* from the back of the pit down to the orchestra, which trembled at every nerve of catgut it contained. And, in addition to all this, he became skilled in the most seemingly desperate sham-fights, ending with roars of laughter, or real combats, to maintain his position in the field.

Among the remarkable circumstances of this riot, a reader of the present day may find the persecution of Mr. Kemble and his family the most unlooked-for occurrence. A party of the champions was ordered to visit his house in Russel-street, after the usual close at the theatre of an evening — to remain there only a certain time, and then disperse. This was humanely aimed at the nerves of Mrs. Kemble and her female domestics. The magistrates came there and gave the necessary

orders in case the building should be forced, or an attempt made to set it on fire. There was a party of the military close at hand.

The truth of this matter is, that the thoughtless play-goer soon became a mere tool in the hands of the politician — nor did the secret fairly escape until the O. P. dinner, when some visitors at the table, holding office under the crown, to their amazement and disgust heard, that the committee in the next room, who were framing their resolutions, consisted (*very properly*) of the same gentlemen who had managed the *funds* of the Westminster election. Now Mr. Harris, the father, and his son, between them, held seven twelfths of the property of the theatre, and Mr. Kemble but *two;* it naturally followed that, as to the measures taken, the latter was more likely to give effect to the decisions of the superior interest, than determine all by his own *avarice* or *vanity*, or any other of his infinite bad qualities! But it was publicly announced that the old gentleman, though destroyed in his health by exposure to the rain on the day of the foundation, was come to town, ill as he was, and with his characteristic bravery, said, "he would "risk the last shilling of his property rather than "submit." Theatrically speaking, therefore, there was no reason for the flattering preference given in this business to Mr. Kemble. If Mendoza and other *boxers* were introduced into the theatre, *he* was the very last man about the concern to suggest such interference, or to think of either public or

private resistance of the *kind* implied by such agents.

There is a fluttering tribe of songsters about the town, who are so afraid of being *dull*, that they are never *rational*, and from such persons, not malicious, but simply *wanton*, the O. P.'s derived verses, sometimes above their comprehension, and always better than they deserved. Mr. Kemble was invariably the hero of these levities. Stunned by the noise, irritated by the vulgar abuse of this mob, personally ill, and under the influence of his constant resort, *opium*, he one night, using the very idle formulary of genteel periods, said, "Ladies "and Gentlemen, I wait to know what it is you "want." This variation for the better term, "your pleasure," was laid hold of with great vehemence. Usually sufficiently guarded, this phrase had escaped from his infirmity; but his *system* as to the public was address of *profound respect*. Indeed he could not but feel, that the actor should do this for his own sake; or otherwise what is his condition? — To be anyway the *servant* of the PUBLIC, may gratify even a lofty nature: this term *alone*, kept steadily in view, *liberalizes* the profession; for he whose talent is prostituted to the amusement of a RABBLE, must, as a man of either sense or feeling, shrink in disgust from the meanness of his occupation.

Mr. Kemble ardently loved his profession — he thought that the theatre, more than any other pub-

lic place, was bound to speak with extreme propriety the language of the country. He consequently, upon principle, took infinite pains in his own pronunciation. Walker, who had written ably on the subject, used to visit him, and I think he commonly agreed with that orthoëpist. He had not forgotten Garrick's epigram as to the old vice of pronunciation, and constantly therefore took care "that *I* should never be mistaken for *U*." Finding at least a *hundred* proofs, without much trouble, that the plural *aches* was written formerly in our verse as a word of two syllables, and consequently so spoken, — when he acted Prospero he threatened Caliban, with the word and the utterance of his countrymen, from Shakspeare to Swift. The blockheads, who would have been safe before Cade's committee as knowing nothing "of a *noun* "or a *verb*," — had a banner with Mr. Kemble's figure painted, and the motto —

"Be quiet — Mr. Kemble's head *aitches!*"

The hatred of Kemble was as much *political*, as any other part of the business. I remember the person of the *honest* lawyer, as they called him, — (I suppose because he had *no* practice). He wore the uniform of the whigs. Now it should be remembered, that Mr. Kemble had quitted the theatre of the Coryphœus of that party: that the adherents to Mr. Sheridan bore him no good will for his desertion to the other standard: that the building of Covent Garden Theatre, upon the *personal* cre-

dit of its proprietors, seemed almost to strew with *salt* the desperate ruins of the other house. Perhaps, therefore, it was without any great pain, that some persons saw the cup of triumph fly from the expectant lips of their rivals —

"As once it fled the lip of TANTALUS."

What though the *field* was won, ALL was not won —there were still grounds of dissention, which could be done away only by long contest or submission; either of which lowered the crest of their once *secure*, but now harassed and apprehensive competitors. If the managers of Covent Garden should ultimately *succeed*, a victory would be gained, which, by shewing greater GAINS in future, might lead the speculative to replace their own Apollo. If they *failed*, it shewed the folly of struggling any longer for the rival erection; and time and despair would dispose of its enormous debts with the lost books of LIVY, or any other irrecoverable treasures of antiquity.

There was an expression very like enjoyment upon the faces of many persons who had been connected with the other house. Perhaps we never altogether grieve at the calamity of a rival. Certainly the attachment to Mr. Kemble in such people never drew them into any altercation with his persecutors. If they spoke at all upon the subject, they spoke the same language.

But to return to the course of this narrative. I

cannot imagine such egregious folly in the proprietors of Covent Garden, as to suppose that any declaration, however respectable, made upon inspection of their books, would satisfy the sort of persons who assailed them. However, it might be proper to publish such a statement, to keep firmly on their side the leading authorities, and the persons of fortune and consideration in town — that the *first* might be assured an alarming riot was not resisted for an object whose necessity was not cogent, and the *other* classes convinced that they were not *taxed* in their amusement without the true commercial ground for it — "that in no other way "could the patentees obtain a suitable interest on "their capital." The committee consisted of — Sir Charles Price, Bart. M.P.; Sir Thomas Plumer, Knt. his Majesty's Solicitor General; John Sylvester, Esq. Recorder of the City of London; John Whitmore, Esq. Governor of the Bank of England; and John Julius Angerstein, Esq.

On the 3d of October, those gentlemen, fully satisfied of the facts, after a most minute investigation of the books of the concern, authorised the publication of the result, which was in substance *this:* —

"The rate of profits actually received, upon an average of the last *six* years, is a sum of 6⅜ per cent. on the CAPITAL embarked. If the WHOLE of the property had been insured, it would have been little more than *5* per cent.

"The future profits of the theatre, at the proposed *advance* in the prices of admission, — if the whole capital expended in the new building were to be insured, could be only 3½ per cent. — and if driven back upon the *former prices*, under their present burthens, the proprietors would annually sustain A LOSS of ¾ per cent. upon the amount of capital!"

The average profit of the last six years, alluded to above, was only the inconsiderable sum of 8345*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.* or 6⅔ per cent. upon a capital of rather more than 130,900*l.* at which calculation of capital, be it remembered, Mr. Kemble himself purchased his SIXTH share in the theatre. As to the perfect *competence* of the parties to the investigation, there could be no more doubt, than as to their high honour and integrity. The public never knew any thing before, as to this hazardous description of property.

A few arithmetical illustrations may yet be of use, drawn, in fact, from the statement so authentically made. They will shew a theatre, of all commercial speculations to be the most desperate. The receipts of the six years, taken together, amounted to 365,983*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.*, of which the highest year (the boy Betty's first) is 70,727*l.* 9*s.* 10*d.*; the lowest (1808-9,) only 46,343*l.* 18*s.* But the average of the whole six is 60,997*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.*; this sum divided by 200, the number of acting nights, gives 300*l.* per night, a prodigious receipt for six

years together. But let us look at their payments. — In the six years they had absolutely paid expences of the theatre *only* - - £307,912
And left unpaid debts for which they were responsible - - 8,000

The outlay to bring the receipts was £315,912

Here was a concern, therefore, actually disbursing per year *52,652l.*, or *263l.* per night, so that the whole gain upon the concern to the proprietors was reduced to *37l.* per night — ALL that an immense capital brought them, standing, moreover, themselves a risk from fire of nearly 100,000*l.* and liable to all the caprices of taste, and the perils of weather and of great public calamities. Again, I repeat, there is a fascination about theatres, and those who adorn them, irresistible by prudence, defying all calculation: — tempting to take up, splendid in possession, impossible to relinquish: — in which hope and disappointment eternally succeed each other, and carry the victims usually through life, by the possibility of acquiring temporary aid — leaving at last a questionable possession, loaded with debt, to be the *theme* for endless dispute, and the *profit* only of the salaried performer and the lawyer.

The statement produced no alteration in the conduct of the rioters. On the 4th of October, at his first appearance before them, Mr. Kemble was driven off the stage unheard; and Mrs. C. Kemble,

in Gay's Lucy, was pelted with bitten apples, which she stooped to take up, evidently in a pregnant state, and then threw them gently off the stage at the side scenes. In the course of the evening Mr. Kemble again came forward, and with a suitable compliment to the gentlemen, who had, not *pro formâ*, but most elaborately, gone into so complex an investigation and statement, hoped that the fullest satisfaction would result from the publication, and that liberal justice would be done to the proprietors.

It may be as well here to observe, that the patentees acted as to the *new prices* in strict pursuance of the power vested in them by their patent; and I shall here quote the very terms by which the right is conceded.

"And that it shall and may be lawful, to and for "the said Sir William D'Avenant, his heirs and "assigns, to take and receive of such of our sub- "jects, as shall resort to see or hear any such plays, "scenes and entertainments whatsoever, such sum "or sums of money, as either have accustomably "been given, and taken, in the like kind, or as "*shall be thought reasonable* by HIM or THEM, in "regard of the *great expences* of *scenes*, *music*, and "such *new decorations*, as have not been formerly "used." — 15th Jan., 44th Charles II., 1662.

Thus both the necessity and the right on the part of the proprietors are clearly established.

Bills were found by the grand jury against a

considerable number of the riotors, but nothing could be done against them this year. A rather strong measure, on the 31st of October, by James Brandon, gave into the custody of Samuel Taunton, a constable, the redoubted person of Henry Clifford, the *honest* barrister; and him the said chief and leader of the O. P.'s did violently take before James Read, Esq., the sitting magistrate at Bow-street. For which the lawyer brought his *action* against the zealous Brandon, tried before Sir James Mansfield and a special jury, in the Court of Common Pleas, on the 5th day of December. Sir James Mansfield charged the jury strongly in favour of the *defendant*; but in case their verdict should be for the plaintiff, he requested them to say, whether it was on the ground of Mr. Clifford's *not* being concerned in the riot, or of his not being apprehended before he was *out* of the theatre. This *special* jury found a verdict for the plaintiff, damages five pounds, amid the loudest acclamation from the crowd in court; and the foreman, with reference to his Lordship's request, said that being *unanimous* as to the illegal apprehension of Mr. Clifford, they did not decisively *discern* the other point of his *implication* in the riot.

The learned Judge felt excessively hurt at the matter's being left as equivocal as ever; and apprehended that the dangerous delusion already gone forth, might, in consequence of this sort of decision, still continue.

Mr. Kemble had come down to the trial with his usual fearlessness; but he could not put his head into the Court; and as his "excellent good friends" came out in triumph, received with indifference, or contempt, or pity, the gentlemanly salutations of the faction. He now told me, that his mind was made up.

The usual course of confusion had been repeated, nightly, with little variation, to the 13th inst. inclusive.

On the 14th, however, a public dinner was to take place at the Crown and Anchor, to which were invited all those who disapproved of the conduct of the managers and proprietors of the theatre: and it was announced that Henry Clifford, a *barrister at law!* was to be in the chair.

The company consisted of about 300 persons.

Mr. Clifford took the chair; and after the cloth was removed, gave the health of the King; which was received with great applause.

Mr. Clifford then informed the company, that, in consequence of his having been chosen to preside at that meeting, he had that morning received a message from Mr. Kemble, who had expressed a great desire to attend this meeting, could he be guaranteed in a polite reception, and preserved from insult or injury. He (Mr. Clifford), as their Chairman, had, upon this, *ventured* to assure him that his reception and entertainment

should be such as one gentleman ought to receive from *others;* if he were supported in this pledge, he would immediately desire Mr. Kemble, who was in the house, to be invited to meet them, and, if possible, carry into effect those conciliatory measures which the proprietors were inclined to adopt.

A show of hands being made upon this subject, the room unanimously agreed to receive Mr. Kemble, and to treat him with every mark of politeness and respect, as they were pledged to do by their Chairman.

Soon after this, Mr. Kemble entered the room, and was received with as much applause as ever marked his finest piece of acting on the stage. He advanced to the top of the room, and took his seat on the right hand of Mr. Clifford.

Mr. Clifford then addressed the meeting again. As Mr. Kemble was now in the room, he would inform them of the substance of what had passed at the interview he had with that gentleman. — Mr. Kemble had expressed himself sincerely sorry for the interruption occasioned to that good understanding which had ever existed between the public and the stage. He had also, on the part of himself and his fellow proprietors, expressed a strong desire to do every thing in their power to conciliate the public, and restore that harmony and unison of feeling, which had heretofore been so happily common to them.

A conversation ensued which does not merit to

be preserved, besides that the pith of it is found in the resolutions brought in by a committee, which had retired for the purpose of framing them.

Mr. Clifford, in proposing them from the chair, commenced by saying, that he considered them as perfectly equitable; and on a call being made for the *names* of the committee, he observed, that he did not *know* all their names; but the meeting might be satisfied with their independency and public spirit, when he told them that they were the *same gentlemen* who were entrusted with the management of the funds subscribed on the *Westminster election!!*

The resolutions were then read as follows:—

"We presume that the public will be satisfied with these, if acceded to on the part of the proprietors this evening, viz:

"I. That the private boxes shall be reduced to the same state as they were in the year 1802.—[This Mr. Clifford explained to be before Mr. Kemble went to Covent Garden, which he did in that year.]

"II. That the pit shall be 3*s.* 6*d.* — the *boxes* 7*s.* — [Much noise and clamour, and some opposition to the latter part.]

"III. That an apology shall be made, on the part of the proprietors, to the public; and Mr. Brandon *shall be dismissed.* — [Great applause.]

"IV. That all prosecutions and actions, on both sides, shall be quashed."

Owing to the tokens of disapprobation at the latter part of the second resolution, the chairman put them, *seriatim*, to the vote of the meeting; and they were carried, almost unanimously; some *dozen of hands* only being held up in opposition to the continuance of the box price at 7*s*.

Mr. Clifford said, that, having submitted these propositions of the committee to the consideration of the managers, he begged leave to propose, as a toast,

"May this day's meeting produce a reconciliation between the managers of Covent Garden Theatre and the public, equally advantageous to both."

This toast was drank with three cheers.

Mr. Kemble then stood up, amidst great applause, and said —

"Gentlemen,

"Before I withdraw for the purpose of making the necessary preparations for stating the arrangement that has taken place, in to-morrow's newspapers, I beg leave to express to you my hope, which I do from the bottom of my heart, that the propositions now agreed to will lay the foundation of a lasting good understanding between the public and the theatre. [Plaudits.] I have also to return to you, personally, my best thanks, for the kind and polite treatment I have received since I came into this room."

Mr. Kemble then withdrew, with shouts and

clapping from the company. "His health," however, was previously given by the chairman; and "Thanks to him for the handsome manner in which he had come forward on this occasion." This toast was received with a burst of approbation; and soon after, the majority of the meeting departed.

The noise and tumult at the new theatre this night by no means rose to the excess which many apprehended, in consequence of the meeting and dinner which took place at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, and from whence it was expected the company would have proceeded to the theatre in a formidable body. The interruption during the play was partial, and proceeded principally from the communications made almost every minute from the Crown and Anchor company to the pit. At length the universal cry was "Mr. Kemble, Mr. Kemble;" and at the end of the first act of the farce, Mr. Kemble made his appearance, in his walking-dress — half-boots, great-coat, round hat, and cane, as he had come from the tavern. It required near half an hour to procure — what was universally bawled for — *silence*. At length he said, —

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"I ask a thousand pardons for presuming to appear before you in a dress so little suitable to the very high respect which I feel, and which it is my anxious wish ever to shew you in this place." —

After some interruption, but all from the incessant demand for silence, he resumed — "It is entirely owing to the circumstance of my not being apprized that I should have the honour of appearing before you this night. Ladies and gentlemen, I have been with the company of gentlemen who have dined together at the Crown and Anchor Tavern; where a set of propositions were submitted to us for consideration, and to which the proprietors have agreed. The first proposition is, that the boxes should continue at 7*s.*" [Applauses and murmurs.] "That the pit should be lowered to the old price; that the tier of private boxes, (*the tier of boxes in the front of the house,*) should be thrown open and restored to the public at the end of the present season. And, ladies and gentlemen, that no trace or recollection of the unfortunate differences, which have unhappily prevailed so long, should remain, I am further to say, that we most sincerely *lament the course that has been pursued;* and we engage that all legal proceedings shall forthwith be put a stop to on the part of the proprietors; I pledge myself that instructions to that effect shall be given immediately." [Applause.] "Now, ladies and gentlemen, before I retire, give me leave to express my most lively sense —" Here a tumult arose, which Mr. Kemble was unable to appease; he therefore bowed and retired: — he no doubt distinguished clearly enough the sacrifice demanded amidst all this fury, and perhaps hoped something

from not *then* meeting the question. He was mistaken; — there was no *mercy* for any one.

The only object of any great moment now, was the dismission of poor Brandon; the zeal with which he had discharged his duty to his employers was an offence that admitted of no pardon. Mr. Munden attempted to introduce him for the purpose of reading an apology which he held in his hand. This detestable rabble received him with a perfect storm of execration; they threw at him oranges and sticks, so that his life became in danger; the good creature was compelled to withdraw. Mr. Munden soon after introduced to them Mr. Henry Harris; that gentleman with an air of much submission ventured to tell them that Mr. Brandon was an old and faithful servant of his father's. The answer to this was, "He must be dismissed," it is a *sine qua non*, discharge him. Mr. Harris bowed and retired.

On the following night, as soon as Mr. Kemble appeared in Penruddock, the usual savage war-whoop of the O. P.s was resumed: the calumet of peace was never to be smoked, unless Brandon were discharged. Quiet, not order, being at length restored, Mr. Kemble addressed them in these few words:

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Having had the misfortune to incur your displeasure, Mr. Brandon has withdrawn himself from the office of box-book and house-keeper to the theatre."

By making this sacrifice the first act of the play passed with little interruption.

Emboldened by this success, they now resolved that the manager should drink the cup of bitterness even to its dregs, and they accordingly demanded a specific apology for the employment, as they said, of Jews and boxers to coerce the public.

Mr. Kemble immediately came forward and spoke to the following effect:

"I understand your displeasure now arises, gentlemen, that an apology has not yet been made for the introduction of improper persons to this theatre. I ask your pardon for not having made it sooner; and I now, in my own name, and on the part of the other proprietors, most humbly apologize for the same; we are very sorry for what is passed, and beg leave to assure you that inclination and duty will alike render it our first pride, for the time to come, to prevent any thing of the kind from occurring again."

Mr. Kemble was here cheered by an universal huzza, and the O. P.s, who came prepared for their victory, hoisted a large placard in the pit, with the words inscribed,

"We are satisfied."

In the course of the evening this ratification of the peace was a second and a third time displayed, and amidst universal shouts of joy the curtain dropt that night upon the disgraces of the stage.

CHAP. VIII.

A MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER. — PRONUNCIATION.— ACHES, MR. KEMBLE'S OWN DEFENCE OF THAT DISSYLLABLE. — PASSAGE IN MACBETH. — HIS NOTION AS TO EMPHASIS. — ROMAN CHARACTER. — MR. KEMBLE PARTICULARLY DEVOTED TO ITS THREE FINEST DISPLAYS, CORIOLANUS, BRUTUS, AND CATO.—THE AUTHOR'S VIEW OF THE CATO. —MR. KEMBLE MENTALLY AND PERSONALLY CONSIDERED, TO SHOW THE RADICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MR. GARRICK AND HIMSELF. — THE SPORTIVE EXUBERANCES OF THE ONE—THE RESERVE OF THE OTHER AS TO MIMICRY. — HOW COURTED BY THE GREAT.— HIS RECEPTION AT CARLETON-HOUSE.

After the conclusion of so fierce a storm as that which we have just described, the reader may be glad of an opportunity to discuss some points of a pure literary character, in which Mr. Kemble himself will assign his reasons for a peculiar pronunciation or a preferable emphasis.

We have just seen, that the rioters who advocated the old prices, had, among their other qualities, assumed those of the critic, and made themselves, at all events, extremely merry with the sound of the word aches. Among the performances of Mr. Kemble, his Prospero, in the Tempest, had

excited remarkable notice from the groundlings, not so much from the awful dignity, or paternal goodness which were certainly to be found in it, as from a single word in a speech of the Magician to Caliban, which Mr. Kemble dared to pronounce agreeably to the intention of Shakspeare. It occurs in the second scene of the first act.

> " If thou neglect'st, or dost unwillingly
> What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps;
> Fill all thy bones with achës; make thee roar,
> That beasts shall tremble at thy din."

The reader here sees, that the line would be incomplete, if the disputed word were not pronounced as one of two syllables. The more modern *akes* can only have the power of a monosyllable. It would at this time of day be assuredly useless to recapitulate, from either the ancient or modern writers, the numerous proofs of Mr. Kemble's accuracy. He was commonly, but very erroneously, supposed to be a man extremely gratified by scholastic peculiarity, and a sort of knowledge far fetched and worth but very little. Few men of his time were less addicted to enquiries of such a nature. On the subject of this painful word *aches*, disputes often arose in society, and the topic, as is usual, was argued with more heat than knowledge: on one such occurrence the difference of opinion terminated in a bet; the most proper thing in the world; as presumption ought undoubtedly to pay for its ignorance, or its obstinacy. Mr. Rees,

of Paternoster Row, although sufficiently confident as to Mr. Kemble's practice and its motive, addressed a letter to him, late in his dramatic life, the answer to which I insert here for the sake of closer reference to a disputed matter.

(COPY.)

" My dear Sir,

" I never do pronounce the word *aches* in two syllables, (like the word *aitches*,) but when the metre of a verse (that is, but when the *measure* of the poetry or verse) requires it. So much for the wager.

" The old pronunciation of the word *aches* in two syllables is so entirely laid aside in common conversation, and in all modern use, that it would be ridiculous indeed to use it familiarly, and idle to attempt its revival in poetical composition: yet when the word occurs as a dissyllable in our elder poets, it must be so pronounced; because in a metrical work, the metre must be observed. These lines are in Pope's Essay on Man: —

> ' Ask of thy mother Earth, why oaks are made
> Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
> Why Jove's *satellites* are less than Jove.'

" The word satellites is now-a-days pronounced in three syllables, and a man would be a coxcomb to affect to pronounce it otherwise; but it was pronounced as four in Mr. Pope's time, and he em-

ploys it as four, — and a man would be thought very ignorant, who, in reciting Mr. Pope's lines, should destroy their metre by giving this word its modern pronunciation. If the old use and pronunciation of the word *aches* can be decided by authority, I should think Baret, in his Alvearie, F. 1580, conclusive on the question.

' The ache, or payne of body or minde, &c.'
' To have ache, payne or griefe, &c.—Vide *Ake.*'

And under Ake, to which the reader is referred, ' Ake is the verbe of this substantive Aches, *ch* being turned into *k*', &c.

" So that it appears that anciently the monosyllabic and dissyllabic pronunciation distinguished the verb and substantive.

" I beg pardon for taking up your time with so much of this uninteresting matter.

" I am, my dear Sir,
" Yours, truly,
(Signed) " J. P. KEMBLE."

" May 13. 1816.
No. 89. Great Russel Street, Bloomsbury Square.

" *Owen Rees, Esq.*
Paternoster Row."

I shall not think it necessary to do more, when Mr. Kemble's own defence has been considered, than to recapitulate the authorities on which his

practice was grounded; namely, Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ford, Davenant, Dryden, Otway, and Swift. Perhaps, however, the reader may pardon the insertion of two passages, which I myself discovered in Hudibras.

> " Can by their pains and aches find
> All turns and changes of the mind."

Again,

> " As other flames and aches prove."

It is not a little remarkable, that Mr. Kemble, for twenty years together, whenever he acted the character of Jaffier in Venice Preserved, had given the same pronunciation to this unhappy word, when in the first scene of the second act he thus imprecates disasters upon Priuli.

> " Kind heaven, let heavy curses
> Gall his old age! cramps, aches rack his bones!
> And bitterest disquiet wring his heart."

But I never heard a *breath* of displeasure there; the storm seemed to wait only upon the Tempest. Perhaps my friend may be excused, after the long and painful studies he had made, if he did not expect much instruction from a mixed audience; or seek for any steady illumination from the hurried decisions of the daily critic. Indeed, he very rarely looked into a newspaper.

It is often extremely difficult to find ears nice enough, to observe how much the elevation of the voice renders *emphasis* unnecessary; the higher key does all that is expected from the pointed impulse. A very ingenious friend of ours, for whom Mr. Kemble entertained the highest regard, — in his studies of Shakspeare thought he had found a new point, by placing a strong emphasis on the word *bid*, in the following passage of Macbeth —

> " Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
> Great Birnham wood to high Dunsinane hill
> Shall come against him.
>
> *Macb.*— That will never be;
> Who can impress the forest; bid the tree
> Unfix his earth-bound root?"

I have no opportunity of offering to the reader the arguments by which our friend supported his opinion. Mr. Kemble's answer, however, to them was as follows: —

" My dear Taylor,

" Don't you see, that '*bidding the tree unfix his* '*earth-bound root*' is but an amplification, as it were, of '*impressing the forest*' — and consequently, that no emphasis is necessary? All unnecessary emphasis must be bad emphasis; for, unless some contradistinction is understood by it, it becomes nonsensical. — You would not expect, perhaps, to find *me* an enemy to ingenious discoveries in this kind; but the truth is, that a poet's

literal meaning requires little emphasis, to be thoroughly understood to an audience; — the emphasis I wish to see cultivated is of that sort that swells the passion of the scene, and ennobles the sentiment.

" Yours,

" J. P. KEMBLE.

Dec. 23d, 1795.
13, Caroline-street, Bedford Square.

" I am confined to my room by a bad cough, and can't act to-night — you might call for half an hour."

I have myself no kind of doubt of the propriety of Mr. Kemble's decision. " To *bid* the tree un- " fix his earth-bound root" is, as he remarks, but an amplification; or, as I should say, an *illustration* of the words " impress the forest:" — for let us consider the meaning of the whole passage, and Dr. Johnson's interpretation of the first member of it may decide as to that which follows.

He says — " Who can command the forest to " serve him like a soldier impressed?" To which I may add, *that is*, bid the *trees*, of which it is composed, *unfix* their earth-bound *roots*. A mere illustration of the previous passage.

Thus the reader sees, that to "impress the forest" necessarily implies the *unfixing* of its *roots*, without which, its leafy inhabitants could never march away, to subdue or terrify Macbeth.

In the latter part of Mr. Kemble's career, he seems to have devoted himself with infinite solicitude, to the impersonation of the Roman character. Coriolanus had, indeed, for many years been considered as a performance absolutely unparalleled.—The high patrician pride of that hero leads him to venture every thing for the Roman NAME; but he *thinks* only of the senate, and the triumphs of their arms: for the multitude he has no affection, but as they promote his objects, and are the ready slaves of his ambition. He therefore looks with jealousy upon every popular encroachment, and cannot submit to ask with courtesy for even that which the people are lawfully empowered to bestow. Such men are not at all suited to a free government; and, with amazing inconsistency, they despise other nations for wanting those *very* popular rights, which, personally, they feel disposed at home to *deny* and to *resist*. These men value their services at a rate, which the free can never be expected to pay. That sort of fame, which exists but in the popular breath, becomes at length despised from its certainty; and the victor resiles from a cheap and vulgar reward, to gratify his vanity in lonely abstraction, or the permitted applause of a privileged order. In such a frame of mind, disappointment excites a perfect frenzy in the soul; the principles, which produced the *hero* at his outset, lose their influence for a season, and the man will some-

times hurry even into treason for the sole delight of unnatural vengeance. But he is equally insecure either as a friend or an enemy; when fighting against his COUNTRYMEN, he will allow no one to despise his COUNTRY: a word will revive the original incentive to virtue, and the renegade must be sacrificed by those whom he had served at the hazard of infamy.

The severe character of CATO allowed of no paltering with the freedom of his country: he lived only to promote it. — Always full of energy, he had erected its standard in Africa, and drawn every possible advantage during the long fascination in which Cæsar was held by Cleopatra. When the amazing fortune, or abilities, of the first and greatest of the Cæsars, had subdued even the very hope of resistance, he opened for himself a passage to a purer atmosphere, and died as heroically as he had lived.

Mr. Gibbon has taken the pains to point out some instances in which BRUTUS, the nephew of this great man, did not act upon the noble principles of his uncle — in which he condescended to accept an important trust from the hands of Cæsar, the command of the Cisalpine Gaul. That great captain, at this time, had set out for the African war. If Cato had made an irruption into Italy, would his nephew have marched his legions to repulse him? or by his inaction have betrayed the trust reposed in him? Was the conduct of Cæsar *ever*

ambiguous? Could Brutus on this subject differ from his uncle Cato? Why was the latter in arms, but that Cæsar was ambitious? Was his assassination *only* the glory of Brutus?

With a rather amiable inconsistency the Roman historian regrets that there should be any doubt as to the famous letters from Brutus, in which his patriotism is exhibited by himself as superior to all compromise — and he declares "that were his "father alive again, he would not suffer him to "possess a power above the laws and the senate." Indeed, when he examines the conduct of his friend Cicero, he hardly treats him with respect— as a man, who is not impatient of a master, but only anxious that he should be a person, whom he could influence by his counsels. Brutus, on this head, sees little difference between Antony and Octavius.

With respect to Mr. Kemble's performance of these illustrious stoics, I can have no doubt that his Cato was the superior effort. Superlatives are continually in our mouths — "the present eye "praises the present object," and I can by no means be sure that I have not exhausted the vocabulary of praise, in speaking of Kemble's Coriolanus. In the busy variety too, the rush of passion, the quick transition of character, Coriolanus has an immense scope, and offers to such an actor infinite advantages. But Cato stands before me with a venerable unity of principle and purpose, that de-

mands and receives our perfect veneration. From the opening speech to the last there was not a line, which Mr. Kemble did not seem to have studied, as if conscious of that Superior Intelligence, whom Seneca presumed to contemplate, with satisfaction, the acts of the divine Cato.

> " No common object to your sight displays,
> But what with pleasure Heaven itself surveys;
> A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
> And greatly falling with a falling state !"
>
> POPE's *Prol.*

Dr. Johnson has an allusion to this character, which bears upon his representative on the stage; it may be found in *the* preface to Shakspeare. " Familiar comedy (says that great critic,) is often " more powerful on the theatre, than in the page; " imperial tragedy is always less. The humour of " Petruchio may be heightened by grimace; but " what voice or what gesture can hope to add dig- " nity or force to the soliloquy of Cato?"

I think I am able to answer this question truly in a word: — Mr. KEMBLE's. Indeed I may fearlessly produce his opening scene of the 5th act, as the unrivalled wonder of his art — as an effort surpassing the highest-wrought imagination, and carrying the British stage to the summit of its glory.

Addison's best editor assumes, that " Cato will " be supremely admired by all candid and judi- " cious critics, not as a *tragedy*, for which the sub- " ject was unfit, but as a work of art and taste."

If he had seen Mr. Kemble's performance, he must have questioned his tragic *exclusion* of Addison; and have admitted, with the grateful terror, the severe delight, of a mind like his, the utmost sublimity of *tragedy*, in the scene with Decius, the second of the 2d act: — the fourth scene of the 4th act, where he meets the *corpse* of his son; and that to which I have already, I hope, excited the utmost attention. I trust that few of my readers have missed an opportunity, which is so little likely to recur: — to those, who *have* witnessed Mr. Kemble, and enjoyed the emotions he excited by the following lines, I may *recal* the music of virtuous feeling, as it swelled upon the organ of the great actor, and raised humanity above itself.

CATO, *meeting the corpse.*

" Welcome, my son! here lay him down, my friends,
Full in my sight, that I may view at leisure
The bloody corse, and count those *glorious* wounds.
How beautiful is death, when earned by virtue!"

The little struggle with *nature* for a moment — the *advance*, to meet the honour to his name — the " full in my sight" — the "*glorious* wounds" and the soothing tranquillity of the last line, in which virtue becomes taste, and taste virtue — only his OWN voice and gesture have ever been able to convey.

On such an occasion it is melancholy, not merely for the actor, but mankind, that the record lives

only in the increasing feebleness of the memory, and the insensible departures of imitation. The painter's art can give only the gesture and expression of an instant. Happily our friend, Sir Thomas Lawrence, has preserved the most absolute *identity* in his portrait of Mr. Kemble revolving the profound doctrine of Plato on the immortality of the soul; and I know of no subject, even from his own pencil, which surpasses it either in dignity or truth.

Having thus fully expressed my admiration of this great and transcendent effort of Mr. Kemble's genius, I shall not avoid a subject upon which I know that I am expected to touch — one that brings Mr. Kemble, as an actor and a man, in a degree of comparison with the greatest of his predecessors.

When the death of Garrick was said to have "eclipsed the gaiety of nations," the expression was more *literal*, than it was commonly supposed to be. That great man practised his art wherever he was; and what Diderot, I think, calls his *singerie sublime*, rendered him the faithful representative of all human passions and conditions. Indeed he seemed to *sport* with the emotions he excited, and delighted to pass instantaneously from the horrors of Macbeth's visionary dagger, to the ludicrous disaster of a pie-man's apprentice, who, gaping inconsiderately about him, lets his crowded board of pastry fall into the kennel. Such is the faithful

report of Grimm, in the year 1765, to his friendly patron the Duke of Saxe Gotha.

While Mr. Garrick was in Paris, Carmontel made a sketch of him, standing in a tragic attitude, and on the same canvas, between folding doors, a comic Garrick, who has surprised *himself* in his serious mood, and is laughing at his gravity. While he was sitting to this artist, he would not, perhaps could not, remain still an instant, but amused himself, to the great astonishment of the Frenchman, in passing, by a variety of gradations, from the extreme of joy, to that of sadness, and kindling his expression onward even to the agonies of horror and despair. This may be called the gamut of the actor, for why should there not be a scale of the passions, as well as one of successive sounds?

I have often in life been considerably annoyed, during the nightly display of my friend's talents, by the *confidence* with which my own cotemporaries, and even juniors, spoke of the powers of Mr. Garrick. Some strong and pointed expression on such occasions was commonly found, by which a question seems for ever decided; and the present excellence is sacrificed to the past, wantonly, unnecessarily, and perhaps unjustly. To such very decisive persons, it may not seem improper to have remarked as follows: — "All this may be as you "have stated it. But pardon me, if I venture to "ask, knowing, I think, your age, How did you, "at the requisite period of observation, acquire your

" *knowledge* of the art? Time now has ripened " your faculties, and I can readily admit your pre- " sent discernment, in proportion to your particu- " lar study of the science. I say *particular* study, " because I shall have to show, if I mistake not, as " to this very art of acting, the greatest minds hur- " ried away by an enthusiasm, that, as usual, per- " mitted no actual operation of the judgment; " and made even some of the greatest orators of " this country prefer a boy of thirteen to Mr. Gar- " rick himself."

Let not the reader for a single minute conceive that I say this, to insinuate a doubt as to the real talents of Mr. Garrick. I was early taught, on the competent judgment of Mr. Henderson, to know him, for the *great* and *general* master of his art. Such is my tendency to admire him, that I put aside the declaration of Dr. Johnson, as to his power in soliloquy; and for my own part do not believe " that one of his scene-shifters, or any per- " son, occupied in the scene upon his stage, could " have spoken the ' To be, or not to be' of Ham- " let so well as it was given by Mr. Garrick."

Nor is it necessary to Mr. Kemble's *fame*, that his immortal predecessor should be in the slightest degree undervalued. I see that they were from nature, and habit, and peculiar studies, essentially different from each other — that the element of the one actor, if I may so say, was DIGNITY, and of the other, PASSION. I speak here of radical distinction

between the men; because I as easily believe that Mr. Garrick could become *dignified*, as I am sure that Mr. Kemble could be *impassioned*. Still their qualities were, in the main, as strongly discriminated as their persons.

But to look farther into the habits of these great men. Johnson objected to Garrick's being admitted into his club; "He will disturb us," said he, "by his buffoonery." He would not have objected to Mr. Kemble. The notions formed by these great actors, of the art they professed, were totally adverse. Mr. Garrick carried its exercise into social mimicry, and the eternal desire to govern the muscles of every being with which he came in contact. He would play Punch rather than not be acting; and seek an audience to his merriment among the *servants*, if their masters were too desperately grave for him to venture to break in upon them.

This is to be a *comedian;* a mind of complexional hiliarty, happy alone in the exercise of its powers. Such also was the mind of Henderson; he assumed to himself the power of entertaining, not as a task, but a privilege, and poured himself out in the most ludicrous delineations of life, in all its endless diversity. Mr. Kemble would have thought himself *degraded* by any exhibitions of such a nature; he was impressed with a higher sense of the *dignity* and *utility* of his art; and had not found it so easily acquired, as to be an object

of *sport* and *momentary assumption:* — he, therefore, put on the actor only with the dress of the *theatre*, and was contented in society with such distinction as the scholar and the gentleman could acquire. He carried this feeling to a very unusual extent; for he could rarely be brought even to *recite* in company, but would very calmly take down the book for you, which contained a remarkable passage, and tell you to read it for *yourself*. During thirty years of very unrestrained intercourse, I do not remember his lending even his countenance above three times to any imitation; the best of these occurred, when he one day described to me the glorious sculpture at Strawberry Hill, of Henry the Seventh worn to the bone by avarice and care. He, on that occasion, did say, "Stop; I think I can give you the expression." The look he assumed was singular, and not to be forgotten. When I subsequently visited Strawberry Hill, I immediately recognised the head; and found that he had neither said, nor done too much, for the character of that amazing effort of art.

Although we should be cautious in assigning limits to either nature or art, yet I shall, perhaps, be justified in saying, that the powers of Kemble and Matthews cannot combine together. There is a mental elevation in the one that cannot stoop to the other. I shall surprise many by the remark I am going to make, but I am clearly of opinion,

that there was more *nature* even than *art* in his performances — by which I mean, that his *own* nature greatly influenced all his happiest exhibitions. They who knew him intimately often smiled at the theatre, to see the *man* so visible in the character. As a hint thrown out for his verification, the reader may amuse himself, by thus discriminating occasional *looks*, and *tones*, and *gestures*, through a considerable range of characters, extending from the Plain Dealer, Penruddock, the Stranger, and others of the meditative class, onward to the deep and revolving wisdom of Cato. In all of these, he himself, as I may say, furnished much that was characteristic: *not* by the assumption of what was *foreign* to his nature, but by lending his *own* properties to be the ground-work, which art was to extend and improve. He had much of the *mind*, that informs these characters; and, therefore, when he acted them, they seemed in a great degree to be developements of himself. No, I can never regret that he did not descend from this eminence to mark, with either sport or malice, the unfortunate peculiarities of private life. He had, indeed, no temptation whatever to such an abuse of talent. The great, who sought the society of Mr. Kemble, sought it on the only terms which could be honourable to themselves or him. So it was at Wroxton Abbey, that he was welcomed by Lord Guilford:— thus it was that, in the life-time of the late Marquis of Abercorn, he was the happy and honoured guest

at the Priory. It was thus that Lord Holland knew and loved Mr. Kemble; thus that the accomplished Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Egremont, Lord Blessington, and a long list of his noble admirers, bestowed a lasting and most cordial *friendship* with their notice. And it was for these perfections of the man, his graceful calmness, his unobtrusive wisdom, his steady principle, and unshakeable attachment, that he was honoured by the PRINCE OF WALES with invitations to Carleton House, and distinguished by attentions as tasteful as they were gracious. On one occasion, His Royal Highness, I have heard, smilingly said to Mr. Kemble — "I "am afraid that, before so correct a speaker of the "English language, I have mispronounced occa- "sionally during our conversation." "Indeed," with great frankness, "Indeed, no, Sir," replied Mr. Kemble, "I have heard but a single word in "which I at all differ from your Royal Highness; "and about *that* people are allowed to differ; the "word *oblige;* which I pronounce in the English, "and not in the *French* way."

It is to be remarked, with respect to the pronunciation attributed to the illustrious speaker, that Sheridan, in his dictionary, gives *both* the modes of speaking the word, without an absolute preference, or decision — oblīge — and oblēge. It is added that, on a subsequent visit, the Prince condescended to take a pinch of snuff from the gold box with which he had presented Mr. Kemble, and

sportively remembered the word in question, by saying, "I am obliged to you, Mr. Kemble."

This I give as I received it, not, in course, from Mr. Kemble himself, from whom such a communication was not to be expected; — but I give full credit to the anecdote, because I find it characteristic of the gracious manners of the GREAT PERSONAGE to whom it refers; and expressive of Mr. Kemble's nature, who knew how to combine a manly sincerity with the most profound respect.

CHAP. IX.

SITUATION OF THE COVENT GARDEN THEATRE. — RECONCILIATION DINNER. — MORE PERSECUTION. — LEWIS PUNISHES THE LIVERPOOL RIOTERS. — COOKE SHIPT OFF TO AMERICA. — THE HORSES. — JULIUS CÆSAR. — H. TOOKE. — MALONE. — RETIREMENT OF MRS. SIDDONS. — A POETICAL ADDRESS. — NEW DRURY OPENED. — LORD BYRON'S VERSES. — MR. KEMBLE LEAVES COVENT GARDEN FOR A TIME. — HIS RETURN AND HONOURS. — FRENCH TRIBUTES. — MR. KEAN. — HIS OPENING. — HOW AIDED. — MISS O'NEILL — ANECDOTE. — DEATH OF MR. SHERIDAN. — MR. KEMBLE TAKES LEAVE OF THE STAGE — AT EDINBURGH AND IN LONDON. — DEPUTATION FROM DRURY LANE. — PUBLIC DINNER. — GOES TO THE SOUTH OF FRANCE. — HIS LETTER TO HIS BROTHER. — MR. HARRIS DIES. — MR. KEMBLE DIVESTS HIMSELF OF HIS SHARE IN COVENT GARDEN. — NEGOCIATION FOR HIS OLD PLAYS. — SALE OF HIS BOOKS AND PRINTS. — VISITS ITALY. — RETURN AND DEATH. — HIS SERVANT ROUSHAM. — CONCLUSION.

I MUST now revert a little to the old evil, to show how short all conciliation must have been as to giving the proprietors what was *vital* to the concern. That persons, who refuse sixpence of their *own* in the pit, will give a shilling for *others* in the boxes, need excite little wonder. Perhaps, as to the box-frequenters, the shilling, where it was paid, did but

compensate slightly for the enormous increase of free admissions, or cheap admissions. Generally speaking, the nightly receipts are not increased. But the blow which was not to be recovered, was the proscription of the private boxes. It is a mortifying proof of human weakness, to consider this subject and its frustration. The proprietors had built like the projectors of Babel, and the *confusion of tongues* ensued. They had deemed themselves sure of twenty-six boxes at 400*l.* per annum, amounting to 10,400*l.* What a charming relief, in a season, which, as to the nightly receipts, perhaps produced NOTHING! They had engaged Madame Catalani, that opera frequenters, with all and more than their usual privacy, might miss no part of their accustomed delight; and thus, perhaps, tore away from the King's Theatre many of its greatest supporters. The nerve of Mr. Taylor, however invigorated by his native north, must have been shaken a little by so alarming an invasion. Who even could surmise its end? The drama, enjoyed with the same comfort as the opera, might at length become as eligible; and the classical projectors in Covent Garden might even *precede* the Haymarket in the engagement of any continental prodigy in music or the dance.

Instead of all this, existing but in fancy, we have in future to bear in mind the vast accession of burthen upon the proprietors, with no other relief than could be drawn from very powerful efforts. All

the fascinating captivation of their gorgeous theatre blighted; the charm of novelty dispelled untried; a lingering displeasure felt as to the price of admission; and a jealousy as to the few annual boxes, which were still to be retained. It is true that, for a few seasons, the greatest display of their mature talents might yet be hoped from Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. What leading incidents still claim particular notice, to the retirement of those great performers, I now proceed to relate.

On the 4th of January 1810, the rioters invited Mr. Kemble and Mr. Henry Harris to what was called a *reconciliation* dinner; but, by a toast, they marked the displeasure that a learned judge had excited, in the action of Clifford against Brandon; and upon Charles Bonnor's venturing to suppose, on the authority of Johnson, that reconciliation did not mean *rankling hatred*, they scouted his humane effort in favour of James Brandon, and would not on the *present* occasion listen to such a subject. A renewal, however, of the persecution as to the annual or private boxes took place on the following September, and they insisted on the strict performance of the original contract, *three* private boxes on each side. The proprietors made the attempt to evade it on the plea that Parliament had, by the act for rebuilding Drury Lane Theatre, recognised the right to let annual boxes. On the liberality of a properly constituted public, these gentlemen had a claim, which in all probability would have been

allowed; but as they could appeal only to a representative body self-elected, — inflated by success, and furious at resistance, they tried the experiment for a week — and then, shutting the house for one more, opened on the 24th of September with a *literal* performance of the contract.

It probably was the safer course for them to take; yet at this very time, Lewis had obtained a complete triumph at Liverpool over *his* O. P.s, and had it in his option to convict them of conspiracy; but, at the recommendation of Mr. Baron Graham, the count in the information for conspiracy was given up, and the defendants found guilty only of the riot. I have the *pleasure* to record that, in the November following, Mr. Attorney General brought them up for judgment, and that two of the offenders were sentenced to be imprisoned each *twelve* months in the Castle of Lancaster, another couple for three months, and two more worthies in the same place for two months each. I shall never cease to regret, that the same *direct* course could not be taken, or taken with equal effect, against the leaders of the London conspiracy; who, in the language of the Attorney General, were men systematically deluding the unwary, and who, with nothing but liberty in their mouths, were in disposition, and principle, and practice, the veriest and most unfeeling tyrants in the world.

That devoted being, Cooke, had, in the beginning of the year, sullied the *Roman Father* with

drunkenness, and made his peace in Richard III.: but, on the opening of the next season, after having announced on the 30th of September to Mr. Henry Harris his intention with Mr. Munden to go to town from Liverpool on the Tuesday following; on the 3rd of October, positively *sober* (so Mr. Cooper says), he was, *not* inviegled, but *conveyed*, secretly on board a vessel bound for New York, unknown even to his friends at Liverpool, and shipt off by the American manager with a skill that baffled all resistance. The treaty between them had commenced, it seems, in the month of August; but I must presume, on the 30th of September, was conceived by Mr. Cooke himself to be at an end. Mr. Cooper was properly anxious on this occasion to vindicate himself from any suspicion of practising upon infirmity; beside that there is a pecuniary temptation about our transatlantic stages, that the profession seem unable to resist. The Latin adage was verified completely in poor Cooke; he changed none of his habits either on the voyage or in America — skiey influences were not felt by such a mind; and to the astonished Americans he displayed all the professional power and personal inconsistency and debasement, that alternately delighted and provoked the people of England.

On the 18th of February 1811, in pursuance of a plan, which after long meditation they had determined to adopt, the proprietors of this theatre revived the dramatic romance of Blue Beard, with hitherto

unequalled splendour. There had certainly been in the mind of Mr. Kemble, a strong reluctance to innovate upon the usual entertainment of a theatre royal; and it is highly probable, that could the concern have been allowed to carry their original plan into effect, they might never have resorted to the attractions of the amphitheatre; but persecuted as they had been, rather than encouraged, the scruples of exact taste unwillingly gave way, and the horses were introduced into the establishments of the theatre. Early in the second act of Blue Beard, sixteen most beautiful horses mounted by *spahis* suddenly appeared before the spectators, and were received with immense applause; their various and incessant action produced a delightful effect upon the eye; and when they were afterwards seen ascending the heights with inconceivable velocity, the audience were in raptures, as at the achievement of a wonder. Subsequently, however, they seemed still more astonished at the sagacity, or recollection, of the noble animals before them; — in the charge, some of the horses appeared to be wounded, and with admirable imitation fainted gradually away. One of them, who in the anguish of his wounds had thrown off his rider, and was dying on the field, on hearing the report of a pistol sprung suddenly upon his feet, as if again to join, or enjoy the battle; but his ardour not being seconded by strength, he fell again as if totally exhausted. It is hardly necessary to say more upon

the subject, than that this splendid novelty was completely successful, and showed to the proprietors that means, however irregular, still might be found, to compensate in some degree, the losses they had sustained.

The revival of Cato, and the effect of Mr. Kemble's performance, I have conceived to merit a particular investigation; my opinion is already before the reader. On the 29th of February 1812, Mr. Kemble revived the tragedy of Julius Cæsar; he had, as usual, made some very judicious alterations and arrangements in the piece, and in his own performance of *Brutus* exhibited all that purity of patriotism and philosophy, which has been, not without some hesitation, attributed to that illustrious name. Julius Cæsar is almost single, among the dramas of Shakspeare, in the possession of three male characters, of nearly equal force. This theatre, however, in the persons of Mr. Young and Mr. Charles Kemble, possessed two actors capable of sustaining with equal effect, the impetuous Cassius, and the wily Antony. The other characters of the piece were brought out in their relative proportions; and the stage had realised, perhaps exceeded, the effect of one of the most important scenes of antiquity.

I step a little out of the range of theatrical concerns to notice the death of Mr. Horne Tooke, on the 18th of March 1812: for this gentleman, as a grammarian, Mr. Kemble entertained the highest

respect. I had lent to him my copy of the Diversions of Purley, that he might fill up from it the blanks which the printer's fear, or caution, had left at the press. His note, returning the books, now lies before me, and I transcribe, with pleasure, his opinion of the work.

"However people may differ with Mr. Tooke "in politics, I think it is impossible any reason- "able mind should disagree with him on gram- "mar. I wish we may ever have the conclusion "of his system! The work would, probably, be "the finest treatise on Philosophical Philology, "that ever was, or ever will be, written."

I have already stated, that Mr. Kemble was by no means a politician; there was, therefore, but little intimacy between Mr. Tooke and him; the sage of Wimbledon, however, occasionally dined with Mr. Kemble, and at such times was peculiarly delightful, inasmuch as he contented himself with pouring out that *general* stream of knowledge by which his mind was so copiously enriched. On the 25th of May, of the same year, I had the melancholy task of announcing to him the death of our excellent friend, Mr. Malone. I am unable to name, in the large circle of Mr. Kemble's acquaintance, any gentleman for whom he had a more perfect esteem. He frequently alluded, in conversation, to the elegance of his manners; and delighted to quote him, as one of the best illustrations of the old school. As a commentator upon

Shakspeare, Mr. Kemble greatly preferred Mr. Malone; because he saw in him unwearied diligence, and the most scrupulous accuracy; with an utter rejection of that impertinent self-display which had discredited, on too many occasions, the wit, the learning, and the labour of some of his rivals.

Mr. Malone could by no means be made a convert to the necessity for enlarging our theatres. His sight had never been very good; and, unfortunately, with a view to keep the works of Shakspeare within reasonable limits, he had, in the year 1790, done the greatest possible injury to his eyes, by selecting types, both for the text and notes of his edition, painfully distressing to the great majority of readers. Whenever, after the play, he walked round to Mr. Kemble's dressing-room, where I have joined him, his usual compliment was, "I dare say it was a very perfect perform-"ance; but you have made your houses so large, "that, really, I can neither hear nor see in them." Mr. Kemble sometimes smiled when, with the natural feeling of his country, Malone would, while speaking even of Garrick, honour Barry with an occasional parenthesis. The grand theme seemed to be the wonderful beauty of the voice, and its effect in the thrilling ecstacies of love.

The course of events is, as might be expected, tempered to our feelings — intervals in the succession of either our pleasures or our pains keep us

from too intense a measure of either joy or sorrow. Under whatever circumstances, it is notwithstanding painful to see the departure of any distinguished talent, and the retirement of Mrs. Siddons from the stage seemed to affect her admirers like the loss of the art she professed. She had frequently intimated her intention to withdraw from the scene; but circumstances had induced her to renew her engagements as the interests of the concern might require. On these occasions, I think, she received FIFTY pounds per night, and either taste or speculation would applaud such an arrangement. However, on the 29th of June 1812, she took her leave in the character of Lady Macbeth, which she sustained with all her wonted energy. After receiving the last proof of her terrific talent, the *perturbed sleep*, the guilt that no weariness could *seal down*, compelled by our unappeaseable monitor nightly to repeat its testimony to the murderous fact — the audience would bear no more — they ordered the curtain down, though an act of the play remained unperformed. Mrs. Siddons was to address them, and they were contented to wait in silence, until she should be ready to appear again before them. Her farewell was in verse, and written by her nephew, Mr. Twiss — it every way did him credit. There were persons who thought, that a prose address would have been more striking and suitable to such a parting — but I think they did not consider, that there is always

something indelicate in sending on a LADY, in her own person, to *talk* to a mixed assembly of some thousand people. Under a pressing sense of injustice and persecution, to come suddenly forward, and with a pledge of your innocence, claim their protection, has a quick feeling to urge it, that absolves the slight indecorum. A poetical address partakes more of dramatic representation — the care as to just recitation, and the uttering the studied composition of another mind, relieves in a great degree the performer's own, and ensures almost the requisite and graceful composure of the last obeisance. The close of this address has but seldom been equalled — and I regret that I am unable to afford space to a larger extract. She thus tenderly appealed to her judges and her friends (the *latter* term here implied both): —

" Perhaps your hearts, when years have glided by,
And past emotions wake a fleeting sigh,
May think on HER, whose lips have pour'd so long
The charmed sorrows of your Shakspeare's song:
On her, who, parting to return no more,
Is now the mourner she but *seem'd* before,
Herself subdu'd, resigns the melting spell,
And breathes, with swelling heart, her long, her last farewell!"

She made her reverences with visible emotion, and Mr. Kemble, with fraternal solicitude, came upon the stage to assist her in quitting a delighted public. The long-continued applauses of the spectators were mingled with the tears of many a gentle bosom; — but Mrs. Siddons retired into private

life honoured by all ranks, and in the enjoyment of worldly comforts only inferior to her *fame.*

The unavoidable compression of a last chapter compels me to give only a few lines to a subject, which merits pages of even careful particularity,— I mean the erection of the New Theatre of Drury Lane, by the skill of Benjamin Wyatt; and the steady and unequalled zeal of the late Mr. Whitbread. Nothing short of the high character of the latter gentleman could have raised the necessary funds and inspired confidence where dismay seemed almost a settled impression. However, to his immortal honour, the new Drury rose the creature of his bounty and his love. Who but must regret that the engagements of the Theatre, pressing upon a mind too variously occupied, should even be supposed to have contributed to his melancholy end! I have formerly expressed my steady admiration of its really architectural parts. Its halls of approach, its simple and beautiful staircase, and its saloon. I may therefore be permitted to observe freely, that its stage, in my view at least, could not boast of equal perfection. The great secret, in front of the spectator, is to give the actor his relative importance — he was here lost in an immense space, and the scenery which should have borne upon his performance, and given a locality to the character, was a diminutive picture, hung behind him at a distance. You might set a wood, for instance, in the back-ground, but the persons of the

play, however simply attired, were wandering about under gorgeous vaultings, illuminated by massy tripods in the forms of venerable antiquity. Nor did the architect quite answer the expectations he had raised from his pamphlet — the structure was *not* admirable for the conveyance of the voice — much of the dialogue came imperfectly even to my ear, assisted by a pretty general memory of the language of our drama. However, on the 10th of October 1812, the house opened with an address from the pen of Lord Byron, spoken by Mr. Elliston. To grace the opening, even the address was an affair of competition; but having formerly diverted myself with the subject, when perusing all the *rejected* addresses, I can only say, that the most nervous lines were clearly those composed by Lord Byron. Although I thus give the preference, where it was bestowed by an intelligent committee, yet I do not think the address worthy either of the poet or the occasion. It is inelegantly splendid, and somewhat tedious; its allusions to the triumphs of former days were not happily put; Lord Byron added nothing discriminate to the praise of Siddons, or Garrick, or Brinsley, as Sheridan was styled for the sake of the verse alone. But I forbear, and content myself with expressing my sincere pleasure that we had once again two theatres worthy of the great capital of the British empire.

Mr. Kemble now seeing that the theatre had got

into a steady course of success which allowed of his absence for a time, resolved to avail himself of a variety of engagements that courted him, and among them, always the most distinguished, his friends in Ireland. Mr. Henry Harris carefully advised him as to their progress in his absence, and to that gentleman, in the year 1813, Mr. Kemble thus replies.

" For Henry Harris, Esq. T. R. C. G. London.

" Dear Sir,

" I am very much obliged to you for taking the trouble of acquainting me with the financial state of the Theatre. I wish, with all my heart, the receipt had been greater, that the proprietors might have been able to extinguish more of the debt: — but what is past is past remedy, and with me always past regret. Hope is a more agreeable companion than repining: — though, from what you tell me of the Drury Lane dividend, I am afraid my chance of finding a purchaser is lessened instead of being encreased, as I once thought it might be. My success has been greater than I had any right to expect it would be, and I thank you very sincerely for the pleasure you take in it. My admirers, as you flatteringly call them, will probably see me in the course of the season; for I shall certainly be in London at some part

of it, whatever engagements I may form elsewhere.

" Mrs. Kemble begs you her best compliments.

" I am, my dear Sir,

" Yours truly,

" J. P. KEMBLE.

" *Cork, Sep.* 4, 1813.

" I received your letter only yesterday — it has been lying at Limerick."

On the 15th of January 1814, after an absence of about two years, he returned to act a limited number of nights. By agreement, he had stipulated to dress in his own room, a matter easily arranged by the affectionate politeness of Mr. Fawcett, then stage manager: among a long list of the profession with whom Mr. Kemble always stood highly, I *know* that the respect and admiration borne for him by the gentleman just named has never been exceeded. Mr. Kemble re-appeared in the character of Coriolanus — the pride assumed for the patrician sunk at that moment under the pride of the actor — the whole pit rose simultaneously to welcome him, and while he bent in grateful acknowledgement to the people before him, a circlet of *laurel* fell from the boxes at his feet. This compliment is not *native* to us, but adopted from our enthusiastic neighbours of the Continent. If its continuance among us were regulated by a severe committee of

taste, so that it might be at all times judiciously bestowed, I do not know a more elegant compliment. Let us remember, as some consolation to English *coldness* on such occasions, that, if we do not so warmly flatter the living, we treat the dead with infinitely more respect. In Paris, from the palace to the parish church, all minds are in conflict whether an actor shall be buried as a Christian; and the service of the church is supposed to be prophaned, if breathed over the chill remains of him, whose powers of elocution have delighted, perhaps instructed, the greatest of their preachers.

I again must revert to what I have often observed — I mean the singularity that attended Mr. Kemble's course as an actor. He was now at the very height of popularity; he drew 600*l.* houses, and might have been expected to wear his honours undisputed to the end of his career. In his absence, Mr. Betty, too, had returned, and shown himself a good, but not a great actor: — little differing from his former self, although his mind had received great cultivation in the interval, it became clear that he had been entirely *taught* his *original* lesson; as indeed every man who *would* think upon the subject always knew. Neither his figure nor his countenance had been improved by his manliness. In a word, his performances were greater, but not *better*, than they had been, and the *wonderful* had in course departed from his standard. He therefore

now combated with equal arms, and was certainly inferior to many champions, whom nobody ever thought of comparing with Mr. Kemble.

But in this period of apparent security, the other theatre had started up from its ashes in all the defiance of property and splendor, and even an actor was produced from a provincial stage, able to *dispute*, at all events, the palm, even with Mr. Kemble, for years. The reader sees that I allude to Mr. Kean. The way was well prepared for this gentleman by his friends in town. The newspapers noticed, with apparent fondness and hope, the approximation of his name to that of *Le Kain*, the great actor of France; and some powerful resemblances were remarked, between the recorded terrors of the one tragedian, and the actual and present powers of the other. He was short, too, like Garrick; had a face, it seemed, of wonderful expression; energy unrivalled; and so a great a versatility, that, whether his *Hamlet* or his *Harlequin* were the superior effort, many admirers professed themselves utterly unable to decide. As, however, there seemed no disagreement of *age* between the means and the ends, on which a *wonder* might build itself a temporary residence, one was discovered between his *habits* and his performances, that answered the turn as well. His acting was, therefore, endowed with all the *evidences* of study, and his life was affirmed to be so careless, as to render study *impossible*. How he did *what* he did, and when and

where it had been acquired, became a charm to the witless, which Kean has never, I think, quite dispelled. Well knowing the efficacy of the marvellous, through his whole pofessional career something of the wonderful has constantly been kept up. It was said at one time, that after the violent exertions of the stage, he delighted to mount his horse, and ride away the night in its inclemency and loneliness: that he would dismount, and take the occasional shelter of a gate-house, and arrive, on the following day, in time to benefit some comrade of his earlier life. Eccentricity was the presiding principle, and his greatness shunned the resemblance to other men. In this strain, with a happy recollection of the first Cæsar, his very relaxations were studiously appropriate. He bore the crest of Gloster in his barge for an heraldic cognizance, and his domestic attendant was a young lion. But hear the great model.

> "Danger knows full well,
> That Cæsar is more dangerous than he.
> We are two lions littered in one day,
> And I the elder and more terrible."

I could wish to be able to review fairly and dispassionately the performances of Mr. Kean, to whom the hearted admirer of Mr. Kemble has paid very particular attention. Something, indeed, of this sort should be done, to relieve a really able man from extravagant eulogy on the one hand, and the most savage depreciation on the other. Let me find

a few lines just to hint, that though I think his taste very frequently vicious, and his judgment often imperfect; — though he has almost countless vulgarisms in his pronunciation, and a trick, like Cooke, of speaking with different voices, and uttering the most discordant tones; — yet his energy is so unfailing, as to bear down criticism itself in his rage; and even in the gentler scenes of sorrow, occasional touches of infinite grace and beauty proceed from his imagination. Mr. Kean excited much attention by his Shylock on the 26th of January 1814; but his Richard the Third acquired immediately, and retains the highest rank in his achievements. When Mr. Kemble had seen him, he said, I remember, "Our styles of acting are so totally different, that "you must not expect me to *like* that of Mr. Kean; "but one thing I must say in his favour, — he is at "all times terribly in *earnest*."

It might have been feared that the retirement of such an actress as Mrs. Siddons would have covered with a long night a vast proportion of our great female characters. Mediocrity here, like the mediocrity of verse, can only be borne by inexperience. In addition to which, it may be observed, that it excites no fondness, it forms no fashion — it is the still water of a season — it is an exhibition without a *soul* — the audience and the treasury are equally cold to it. But although an actress greatly below the standard of Mrs. Siddons, inferior in dignity and power to her *latter* self, and even in pathos

greatly exceeded in her *earlier* days, Miss O'Neill displayed in her very first performance of Juliet, on the 6th October 1814, such rare and bewitching talent, as at once placed her at the summit of her art. Her face and person were lovely without being striking, either as to feature or symmetry — she was always genteel, and interesting from the apparent tenderness of her soul. Her attraction was unbounded, and she left only the *regal* woes of tragedy unsustained. The towering grandeur of Lady Macbeth, and the indignant majesty of Katharine and Constance, own no suitable representative but Mrs. Siddons. Let me observe, too, that through the whole range of characters common to both these actresses, the mental intelligence of Mrs. Siddons seemed to be unapproached and unapproachable. Miss O'Neill appeared *equal* to the present occasion, whatever it was;—you always conceived the powers of Mrs. Siddons to be *superior*. It was not given Miss O'Neil to astonish, but she never failed to delight. If my deliberate opinion on this subject should experience any dissent, I venture to affirm that it will not be from observation of equal extent. I have seen Mr. Kemble act with his sister and with Miss O'Neill. I know the precise difference that he felt between their talents. I saw their operation upon his own. Perhaps I may not find a fitter place to remember an instance of gentle courtesy, which passed between Mr. Kemble and the lady whom I have just named. Mr. Kemble at times

suffered extreme agony from the *gout;* but if the theatre required his aid, and he could in any manner support himself on the stage, he would never keep his room, but with infinite address conceal even his torture from the audience, and sustain the character with real philosophy. On one of these nights he was acting the *Stranger* to the Mrs. Haller of Miss O'Neill. A friend of mine, on entering the green-room, found him literally groaning with pain; and being called to the opposite side of the stage, he entreated that gentleman to lead him to his station. On his way thither his dramatic consort passed him, and, sustaining the character, addressed him thus — "I am very sorry to see my "poor husband in such pain." Tortured as he was, Mr. Kemble replied with equal preservation of character — "Yes; you are a dear creature, and "deserve *forgiveness.*"

It is a painful course that awaits me in the few remaining pages of my work; but I am bound to accomplish it, and must find alleviation for the greatest losses in the memory of excellence and the fame which consecrates it. Before I terminate the dramatic career of Mr. Kemble, I am called upon to record the melancholy close of his former friend, Mr. Sheridan. He died on the 7th of July 1816. I am afraid that the brilliant opening of his life fatally deceived him; and that even his *own* genius had not shielded his decline from indigence and embarrassment. A little before he ceased

to be, I remember meeting a reverend friend of his and mine, who, with tears in his eyes, unfolded to me what he understood to be the actual condition of that great man. The PROFOUND MORALIST, at the close of his life of Savage, has inculcated the necessity of worldly prudence, in terms which cannot be exceeded for their dignity or their force. I wait, with some anxiety, to see a POET, of infinite sensibility and taste, press the lesson once more upon the heart, in language worthy of the subject and of his own fame.

Mr. Kemble had anticipated his final departure from the stage by a marked farewell to the audience of Edinburgh, on the 29th of March 1817. On this occasion his friend Sir Walter Scott honoured him with a poetical address, which has the best praise such verse can claim, that of being exact and appropriate. It was spoken and heard with corresponding emotions. The actor returned, after making, for the last time, one of his chief country excursions, to take his departure also from his usual and long favourite residence in the metropolis.

On the 23d of June 1817, he acted for the last time in the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. He chose the character of Coriolanus, I have no doubt, as much from deference to public opinion as any other motive. Perhaps, in exact strictness, he should have closed, as he began, in Hamlet. The illustrious Roman was never exhibited by this great actor with more complete effect. I had secured

myself a seat in the orchestra, and being exactly below him, saw and enjoyed that amazing power, by which the actor is enabled to subdue even his *nerves* to the temporary demand of the scene, and lay *himself* completely aside, to be resumed like a stage revival. I saw nothing that, by a glance or one failing tone, reminded you of the awful LAST.

When the curtain dropt, the audience enthusiastically exclaimed, "No FAREWELL!" They had witnessed an exertion of almost unbounded power, and therefore saw no reason for its cessation. But it was fitting that Mr. Kemble should thus quit their presence, without a claim upon their indulgence. Whenever the time arrives, it is one under which the greatest fortitude may be expected to feel unnerved, and the language of fiction, as poetry is stiled, can alone lessen the pungent suffering of the actor of sensibility. Mr. Kemble was more affected than I had ever beheld him. I shall clear his speech from the easily conceived interruptions, whether proceeding from his own feelings or those of others, and exhibit the whole of it, I believe, literally.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

"I have now appeared before you for the last time: this night closes my professional life.

"I am so much agitated that I cannot express with any tolerable propriety what I wish to say. I feared, indeed, that I should not be able to take

my leave of you with sufficient fortitude, — composure, I mean, — and had intended to withdraw myself from before you in silence; but I suffered myself to be persuaded that if it were only from old custom, some little parting word would be expected from me on this occasion. Ladies and Gentlemen, I entreat you to believe, that, whatever abilities I have possessed, — either as an actor, in the performance of the characters allotted to me, — or as a manager, in endeavouring at a union of propriety and splendour in the representation of our best plays, and particularly of those of the divine Shakspeare; — I entreat you to believe that all my labours, all my studies, whatever they have been, have been made delightful to me, by the approbation with which you have been pleased constantly to reward them.

" I beg you, Ladies and Gentlemen, to accept my thanks for the great kindness you have invariably shown me, from the first night I became a candidate for public favour, down to this painful moment of my parting with you! — I must take my leave at once. — Ladies and Gentlemen, I most respectfully bid you a long, and an unwilling farewell!"

In this address Mr. Kemble had remembered the farewell of his *greatest* predecessor. It seemed built upon it, or rather, it was what truth and feeling demanded from both, and ALL that they demanded.

I observed him narrowly, while he was in its progress — he evidently regretted his *art* as much as his patrons; for when he alluded, as he might indeed proudly do, to his efforts for the "divine "Shakspeare," his voice faltered upon the words, and his tears became visible.

At the close he seemed to summon all his strength, and spoke with hurry, and eagerness to be relieved. He retired with evident emotion, and bowing with graceful and profound respect, till the scene withdrew him from the pursuing gaze of the spectators.

Behind the curtain another trial awaited him; the performers, with whom he had so frequently acted, crouding about him to testify their respect for his talent and affection to his person. He was soon divested of the little *properties* that last adorned him on the stage. Mr. Matthews took away his *sandals*, and merited the gift.

"Things precious long to fancy and to love."

But the honours of the stage were not to invest Mr. Kemble unaccompanied; a small circle of his admirers proposed to invite him to a farewell dinner, attended with sundry gratifying tokens of their esteem, and the design, as it admitted of great accession, so at last it was found to embrace a vast portion of the rank and talent of the country. A committee was soon formed, and Mr. Kemble appointed Friday the 27th of June, as the day when

he would have the honour of waiting upon his friends.

On the morning of that day, he received a deputation from the performers of Drury Lane Theatre, consisting of Messrs. Rae, Dowton, Johnstone, and Holland. But for Mr. Rae's illness, this would have occurred on the evening of his retirement. There was something about Mr. Rae's address to him, singularly pleasing and characteristic. He said he lamented that Mr. Kemble had withdrawn from the stage, "its *pride* and distinguished ornament." He reminded him proudly, that it was "at *their* "theatre, he had attained and perfected his high "professional character." He justly estimated the "*dignity* added by Mr. Kemble to the profession, "by his genius in the art itself, and the force of "his example in private life." Mr. Kemble was sensibly alive to such commendation, and paid his compliments to the deputation cordially and impressively.

At seven o'clock dinner was announced in the grand room of the Freemasons' Tavern. Mr. Kemble and the noble president, Lord Holland, were preceded from the drawing room by the committee, the band playing the march from the occasional overture. Mr. Kemble sat on the right hand of the chairman, and his Grace the Duke of Bedford on the left. Selections from Handel were performed during the dinner by the band, and on the removal of the cloth, the matchless *non nobis* was

given in all its thrilling awe by the best singers of it, that I have ever heard, Leete, Nield, Terrail, Master Turle and others.

After the usual toasts, Mr. Rae and Mr. Matthews handed to Lord Holland the cast and drawing of the Vase, which was to be presented to Mr. Kemble. His Lordship immediately rose and addressed the company. The praise he bestowed upon the great man, who sat beside him, was so much the universal sentiment, that it really needs no particular record — it was full of all his Lordship's well known taste and kindness, and was received with infinite applause. Mr. Young then recited an Ode written for the occasion by Mr. Campbell, of which one stanza so utterly distances the rest, that I beg to keep it, like Paulina's statue of Hermione, "*lovely*, apart."

" His was the spell o'er hearts
That only Acting lends,
The youngest of the sister arts,
Where all their beauty blends.
For Poetry can ill express
Full many a tone of thought sublime;
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but one partial glance from Time.
But by the mighty Actor brought,
Illusion's wedded triumphs come,
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb!"

Had the rest been equal to this in *truth* and *neatness*, and he had indulged his muse in a stanza

that allowed him more dilation and majesty in the characters of the drama, he had rivalled, if not surpassed, his countryman, Dr. Beattie; and this I consider to be very high praise indeed. But in my estimation of the modern school, I may be allowed some of the natural *recurrences* of age.

Mr. Kemble seems to have been rather chilled and checked by the unavoidable attention to his own praises. He perhaps, with some other persons present, thought of the way in which he had *rushed* from such a hearing in Coriolanus; — but he did the best that could be done in the circumstances: — something of *disclaimer*, something of *pride*, mixed up gracefully with sincere *thanks;* and he saw the "*pleasures of hope*," neatly enough, at the bottom of his glass.

Fawcett made him his *General*, in a warm and affectionate speech — Matthews, his dramatic *King*. — Talma spoke, in English, a compliment not ill-turned; and Young expressed his conviction, that "lasting reputation was only to be obtained at the "price which Mr. Kemble had paid for it."

The last toast given was *the Ladies;* and a little before twelve o'clock, the noble chairman and his guest rose to depart. As Mr. Kemble passed slowly down the room, the company pressed upon him to grasp his hand; — and, when he retired, they merely drank one bumper to his future health and enjoyment, and immediately quitted the scene

of perfectly rational and ennobling hospitality. Such was, I rejoice to say, —

" The grac'd respect that claim'd him to the last."

It was, I imagine, a notion peculiar to Mr. Kemble, that he never could be brought to admit that his cough was asthmatic — however, with the evidence of other friends suffering in a similar way, I made up my own mind, that such was actually the nature of his complaint. After his retirement from the stage he got worse rather than better, from the irritation of the lungs, and was earnestly advised to try the lovely atmosphere of the south of France.

At Toulouse he found a residence such exactly as his health required; and there he remained several seasons. But so much must go to the making up a comfortable abode any where to a foreigner, that at length Mr. Kemble found himself obliged to return to Switzerland. His letter on this subject to his brother will be read with deep interest — it is highly characteristic of his judgment and his temper.

" *From Toulouse, February* 27. 1820.

" Come, Charles, my good fellow, take courage — look your pen and ink boldly in the face, and let one know a little how you are, and what you are about. I am about running away towards Switzerland, I think, presently. Since the death of

the Duke de Berri, the violence of party is inflamed to such a degree among our Languedocian hot-heads, that the house is growing rather too warm for spectators merely, indifferent to their selfish squabbles and enmities. What with the political, and what with the religious objections people here have towards one another, there is hardly any such thing as society; — or if, by chance, you meet with half a dozen of them any where, you see no ease, no cheerful carelessness; every one stands on his guard, keeps a wary distance. We unfortunate English are liked by no party. The royalists think we might have taken better care of their interests at the restoration, and Buonaparte's friends will never forgive us their Emperor's defeat at Waterloo, so that I am thinking of packing up. This place, however, that is, the climate, has done me great service. I have never had a cough since I have been at Toulouse, neither last winter, nor this, which has been more severe than any they had felt for thirty years; my spitting of blood has, I am willing to persuade myself, entirely ceased; and my fits of the gout have been for this twelvemonth past so slight, that I make a pish at the sufferance. My intention is, to pass next winter in Italy, thoroughly to confirm these corroborations of health: and then, having done all I can for a crazy constitution, and at the same time gratified a laudable curiosity, I shall return home, well or ill, to pass the rest of my time, as philosophically as I am

able, among a few friends and my books. Your youth and activity make you smile, may be, at my visionary tranquil prospects and designs. If I could take my own way, you would see how quietly I should make one step towards my elysium, by disengaging myself from every thing that seems to connect me with the concerns and bustle of business. We cannot live in this place so cheaply as we were told we could. Those who will content themselves to live in dungeons up three or four pair of stairs, and, in short, manage sordidly in every article of food, &c. may contrive not to be at any great expense; but one may live this way and spend but little money any where. By the receipt Mr. Murray has sent me, I find your houses have hitherto been very indifferent this season. Mr. Elliston, I hear, bears down all before him; what are you about, to let LA STOCCATA carry it away? I hope, as it happens for ever in theatres, some lucky chance will turn up for us, and that the year will end more successfully than it has hitherto gone on. My wife wrote to Mrs. Charles some time ago; but with our best love to her, tell her that she is as bad a correspondent as I am, who certainly have as little right as any one in the world to complain of another's want of punctuality on this score: yet I do complain of her, for she writes so agreeably that one is out of humour to miss her letters.—How do my Lord and Lady Blessington do? Pray remember me to them in the best manner that can be. I see

my Lord has been fighting in the house for old Ireland; and I do think it was hard, to saddle my friend Pat with restrictions, who had never made one whince to deserve them. To every body to whom you think they will be welcome, make my kind compliments. We send you our love for yourself, Mrs. Kemble, your children, Twiss and all his family, Mrs. Siddons, and Cecilia, if they are in town.

"Thine always,

"J. P. KEMBLE."

"*Rue Tolosane, No.* 10.

"For Charles Kemble, Esq."

Mr. Kemble was suddenly recalled to England by the following event: —

On Monday the 2d of October 1820, Covent Garden Theatre had the misfortune to lose Mr. Thomas Harris, who possessed himself one-half of that property. He died at Wimbledon in, I think, the 78th year of his age. His death was of the utmost moment to the concern. While he lived, the undisputed management of the theatre being in him, there was a unity and directness in their operations at that house always of infinite moment in a business, where obstruction is fatal. At his death this *right* to manage did not descend to his son. The proprietors were all entitled to be consulted, and in a time of difficulty what was to conciliate their opinions? It is so easy to figure to

oneself a more favourable result from a difference of system: — cheap indeed is the wisdom of *fancy*.

Had such an event occurred earlier in Mr. Kemble's life, and the full objects of the plan for the new theatre been realized, he might have considered the *entire property* to be a desirable possession; and, though hardly on the conditions of the *memorandum* of which I have already spoken, he might by the other proprietors have been allowed to purchase the whole. But in a state of health, that rendered his superintendance impossible; seeing the theatre heavily embarrassed amidst its greatest success; and little prospect of a speedy termination to the difficulties before them; — he made up his mind, at once, to divest himself of his personal interest; and, accordingly, in the month of November, assigned over his SIXTH of it to his brother Charles. As soon as this, and some few other matters of moment were off his mind, he immediately returned to Lausanne.

When Mr. Kemble left London, his friendly solicitor, Mr. Murray, became the occupant of his elegant house in Great Russell-street; and the only pecuniary objects of much moment to him were his collection of old plays, and his general library, with which it would be idle to encumber a sojourner in a foreign land. As to the first of these, Mr. Evans strongly dissuaded him from a public sale; the very collection formed with so much skill, must be unmade, and reduced to single plays; and as

to any object of lasting reference, the motive of its indefatigable collector, the work, if ever to be done, must be absolutely begun again; and from the rising value of many rare plays among us, perhaps would defy the largest fortune to complete it. The great object, therefore, was to place this unrivalled monument of our drama in the library of some distinguished nobleman; — and Mr. Kemble, through his friends, Messrs. Payne and Foss, at length transferred the complete collection of his plays and play-bills to his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, for the sum of 2000*l.* Mr. Kemble had offered them originally for an annuity of 200*l.* upon his own life. His kind friends here, with a very rational presentiment, thought such an arrangement improvident and quite inadequate. At first they proposed to join Mrs. Kemble's life in the annuity with that of her husband — to this, however, there was some objection — but the illustrious purchaser made every sacrifice that could be expected — he cancelled the original proposal, by paying down the sum of TWO THOUSAND pounds.

I am fortunately enabled, by the kindness of Messrs. Payne and Foss, to shew how Mr. Kemble felt upon this interference for his interest; and how steadily he had determined to fulfil his first proposal to the Duke. His letters to those gentlemen do him infinite honour. But it was proper that such should be the feeling of any party, who was to be mixed up in a transaction with the Duke of DEVON-

SHIRE. I presume his Grace will convert the possession into an heir-loom, so as to take security against the possibility of dispersion. The utility of such a treasure is in its *integrity*.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" I last night received a letter from Mr. Murray, informing me that you had concluded with the Duke of Devonshire for the purchase of my quarto plays for an annuity of two hundred pounds during my life.

" Mr. Murray tells me that he has, for the present, declined the putting of this agreement into execution, because he does not think it would be sufficiently advantageous to me, unless Mrs. Kemble's life, at least, is included in the annuity. I am extremely obliged by Mr. Murray's kind concern for me on this occasion : — but no consideration whatever can make me recede in the slightest point from the proposal I originally empowered you to make to his Grace on my behalf. I have written to Mr. Murray, by this post, to the same effect; and have desired him to ratify the sale and purchase, in due form, according to my own original voluntary offer. If, however, before this letter reaches you, it shall have been judged reasonable by the Duke's agent that Mrs. Kemble's life be included in the annuity, which Mr. Murray seems to think not an impossibility, in that case, I have told

him that I am not so stern a moralist as to require a concession so agreeable to me to be expunged. This, however, is an addition which I have no right whatever to expect; and I abide simply by my terms of the annuity for my own life only.

"If this interruption to the sale of my plays has given you, as I fear it may, any unnecessary trouble, I assure you I shall regret it very much; for I place no judgment in competition with yours as to the value of the books, and am thoroughly convinced that you have, as much as possible, my interest at heart in the disposing of them.

"Pray remember me in the warmest manner to Mr. Foss. Indeed, I address this letter to you both, and wishing both of you many happy and happier new years. I remain, my dear Sir,

"Your obliged and faithful servant,

(Signed) "J. P. KEMBLE."

"Maison Zimmer,
Lausanne, Dec. 31st. 1820."

When you do me the favour of writing to me, pray put (*viâ Paris*) in the corner of your direction; otherwise, they tell me here, your letter will run the risk of making the tour of Germany before it reaches me."

Messrs. Payne and Foss,
Pall Mall, London.
(*Viâ Paris.*)

"For Mr. PAYNE, Bookseller, Pall Mall.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Murray tells me in a letter I have this day received from him, that the Duke of Devonshire is willing to give 2,000*l.* for my quarto plays, instead of the annuity, to which Mr. Murray demurred. I am extremely well pleased with this agreement, and have desired Mr. Murray to conclude it in proper form, that the books may be delivered to the Duke immediately. In moving the plays, bid your people be careful not to let any loose leaves drop out, for there are a few that want to be gummed in, and, if their place should be lost, it might be a troublesome job to find it again.

"I have assured Mr. Murray, and I repeat to you, that without the Duke's complete approbation of this new agreement, I should have considered myself bound by all the ties of integrity to abide by my original proposal.

"The post is on the point of setting off, and only gives me time to assure you and Mr. Foss that I shall always be your very much obliged and faithful servant,

"J. P. KEMBLE."

"Jan. 2d. 1821.
Maison Zimmer, Lausanne."

His very well chosen miscellaneous collection of books sold extremely well. It was not very numerous; but so many persons were found de-

sirous of obtaining some relick from his library, that it produced, under the hammer of the judicious Evans, the sum of 2271*l.* 15*s.* — His prints, chiefly theatrical, 303*l.* 6*s.*

The house of Mr. Kemble, at Lausanne, has been described to me as well entitled to its name, *beau site.* He here enjoyed, in the greatest comfort, a romantic situation and a refined society. His garden formed his principal amusement; he rose early and delighted himself in the cultivation of the sweets around him. His day usually began by reading a chapter in the Protestant version of the Bible, and was continued by his usual studious habits, or rides in his neighbourhood, and the receiving and returning the visits of persons of the first consequence at Lausanne.

His visit to Italy took place only a few months before his decease. The impression of it was exactly such as my knowledge of him anticipated. He was not at all to be numbered in the list of curious travellers. Nothing was more usual with him, than to remark that *romantic* tendency in others, to convert very ordinary appearances into the wonderful. Venice, however, excited his particular attention; and he appeared to consider that singular city as the object of rational admiration. At Rome I know that he saw every thing, that can either tempt or gratify the curiosity of the traveller. A considerable number of illustrious English were in that capital during Mr. Kemble's residence

there; and in the society of Lady Charleville and her party, his visits to either its ancient or modern wonders were duly paid. But nothing could, in the mind of this good, humane man, compensate for the squalid debasement of the people. To use his own expression, it absolutely "made him *wretched*," and he was glad to be rid of a spectacle so repugnant to his ideas of the just demands of man upon government. Mrs. Kemble had still less disposition to the excursive than her husband, and but seldom could be prevailed upon to stir from her apartment. At Rome, however, Mr. Kemble's health became visibly impaired, and Dr. Clarke ordered his immediate return to Lausanne. It was with difficulty that he endured the journey. Home had at first its usual effect upon such natures as his. No man ever more sincerely loved or more adorned *home* than Mr. Kemble. He appeared revived now, and perfectly happy. His friends conceived him to be rapidly recovering from the ill effects of his late tour;—but they were deceived. I am not competent to write upon the tendency of the human economy to particular disorders; I know nothing of their causes, little of their palliatives; yet my notion for many years had been, that my friend would expire in the manner that he did.

I use the very accurate detail of his last days, which was transmitted from Lausanne on the best authority; reserving myself for a few remarks at

the close on the most important subject — I mean his religious opinions. . . . . .

On Wednesday the 19th of February, Mr. Kemble dined at the house of an acquaintance in the neighbourhood, and was observed to be in extremely good spirits; a few friends drank tea with him on the following evening, when he played his rubber (to which he was very partial), and appeared in excellent health. On the Sunday after this day, Mr. Kemble walked for two hours in the sunshine of his garden, and no sign of illness was remarked. He arose on Monday morning as well as usual, and conversed with Mrs. Kemble on different matters; when, according to his usual custom, he read a chapter in his Bible. He again joined Mrs. Kemble in the breakfast-room, and said to her, "Don't "be alarmed, my dear, I have had a slight attack "of apoplexy." Mrs. Kemble was naturally very much terrified, and assisted him to his chair, and when seated, he took up a number of *Galignani's Messenger*; but becoming worse, his friend and physician, Dr. Schole, was sent for, who arrived in a short time, and found him in the position already described, but altered, and exhibiting very unfavourable symptoms. His left side had suffered a decided attack, and he could with difficulty articulate: but seemed extremely anxious to spare the feelings of Mrs. Kemble. Dr. Schole, with the assistance of his old attached servant George, helped him to his bed, and, in the act of conduct-

ing him thither, a second attack took place, so suddenly, that his clothes were obliged to be cut asunder, in order that he might the more speedily be let blood. But nature was fast exhausting; and one attack succeeded another so rapidly, that Mr. Kemble never spoke afterwards, though he seemed perfectly sensible at intervals. Until nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, the 26th of February 1823, he lingered in this speechless state when he expired without any apparent suffering. Thus died this amiable and intellectual man, full of years and honour, in a distant land.

The funeral took place on Saturday the 1st of March, in a piece of ground adjoining the *cimetière*, on the Berne road, procured under the direction of Mrs. Kemble. Mr. Capel and several English are there interred. The Dean of Raphoe, who had lately returned to Lausanne, read the funeral service at the house of Mr. Kemble; and Mr. Cheesebrough, the resident clergyman, who had read prayers to Mr. Kemble when he could attend to them, and was with him when he died, performed the melancholy ceremony at the grave. The age of sixty-six was recorded on the coffin. The death of Mr. Kemble was sincerely felt by all persons at Lausanne, and his remains were followed to the grave by all the resident English, and by many of the Swiss. The English, indeed, had no parties during the week; and one foreign lady of fashion

put off a splendid assembly on account of Mr. Kemble's decease.

The following is a copy of a letter from the English clergyman resident at Lausanne to a professional gentleman, in London, which is interesting, inasmuch as it is in itself very amiable, and as it shows the serenity and virtue of Mr. Kemble's domestic life, and confirms the religious peace of his death: —

"Sir, *Lausanne, Feb.* 26. 1823.

"It is with deep regret that I announce to you an afflicting and sudden event, the decease of Mr. Kemble, who breathed his last at a quarter past nine o'clock this morning. He had been seized with an apoplectic attack about forty-eight hours before his death; and though it was not of any very alarming nature at first, yet it was no less fatal, and he gradually declined, till, without a single sigh or groan, his soul, released from its earthly tenement, returned to Him who gave it.

"During a week or more prior to this attack, his health seemed more satisfactory than for months before, so that poor Mrs. Kemble was very ill provided for so unexpected a blow, and consequently has been in such a distressed state as I cannot pretend to describe. She is, indeed, much indisposed at present, from the effects of a violent nervous attack, which seized her when all our fears of her

husband were confirmed; but in a little time I have no doubt but a sense of her religious duties, in addition to her excellent understanding, will conduce to her amendment and resignation. To you, Sir, no comments on this excellent man's character here are necessary. I will only say, that he was universally beloved by both his countrymen and natives, and that I am deprived of, in my little flock, a most pious and worthy member — but God's will be done! We are naturally grieved at the loss of what was ever amiable, excellent, and of good report, as a standing example to all around; but how great, on reflection, should be our joy, that the feeble praise of man is succeeded by the immortal honour and approving smile of the best and greatest of all beings! I was with him during the greater part of his last hours, and at the final close; and on commending his soul to *his* gracious keeping, whose blood and mediatorial power could alone present it spotless before God, I could not avoid secretly exclaiming, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.'

"It is by Mrs. Kemble's desire that I write to you, who, with her kindest regards, begs you will take upon you as early as possible, the painful task of communicating it to Miss Siddons, and gradually to prepare Mrs. Siddons for such an afflicting stroke, in order that she may not first learn it from any other quarter. Mrs. Kemble's poignancy is increased, on considering what will be the agonizing

feelings of Mrs. Siddons, but calculates much on your kind attention herein. I have written to Mr. Charles Kemble by this post. I beg my respectful compliments to Mrs. Siddons; and having now hastily fulfilled my truly painful duty,

"I have the honour to remain, &c. &c."

The attendance of a Protestant minister upon Mr. Kemble, who stiles him "a pious and worthy member of his little flock," — requires some slight elucidation; inasmuch as Mr. Kemble had been bred a Catholic. On this subject, he thought assuredly for himself. He avoided the indecency of disclaiming the *mode* of religion followed by his father; and looked only to its *vital* character. If the most enlarged charity towards ALL men be *foolishness* to the Catholic, I then, from his repeated declarations, pronounce Mr. Kemble to have been a Protestant. But bigotry of any kind was his utter abhorrence; and he easily reconciled, at least to his *own* satisfaction, all those discordant ceremonials and notions, which keep human creatures, though Christians, still estranged from each other.

While I was proceeding in my work, now so speedily at an end, I received a letter from a servant, who had lived twenty years with Mr. Kemble, and served him ably and affectionately. It has been said, "that no man seems a HERO to his valet." He may, notwithstanding, appear something a vast deal *better*. Let me obtain a minute's attention to

the request of JOHN ROUSHAM; and I must give it faithfully in his own words.

"As I understand you are writing the life of my poor master, I request, Sir, that you will notice his *princely conduct* to me. I lived with him twenty years, his faithful servant; so he called me, and treated me more like a brother than a domestic; for he indulged me in every thing that was proper, and so did Mrs. Kemble. They were the kindest master and mistress that ever lived to me, and to all their other servants. When I left him, he gave me TWO HUNDRED pounds, to help to set me up in business. He was the best and most generous of masters, and if you will insert this much of him for ME, you will ever oblige,

"Sir, your most obedient and
"Very thankful servant."

Yes; the swelling gratitude of a worthy, though humble man, shall find here a record; and occupy the place of a vain and ostentatious eulogium!

CONCLUSION.

As these pages were drawing to a close, after a day of rather severe application, I took down my Tacitus, to delight myself with the noblest biography, that was ever written — his life of Agricola. Its result upon my mind the reader shall have with

entire sincerity; for I would not conceal from him the imperfection of my judgment, after it has been corrected. I had often indulged a hope, that the latter days of Mr. Kemble would have been passed here among us in affluence and honour! that a theatre under his direction might have extended and perpetuated a sound taste in our amusements! that while he lived, he might have lived for Shakspeare; and that in his last moments, the folio of that divine poet might have supported his head, until all memory of his great master was gone!

But his own desires, as they were more moderate, had also more wisdom: and, looking to his life, however natural it may be for the fancy to form such a picture, yet upon mature reflection I entirely acquiesce in the "*decline* and *fall*" of the great Roman Actor. The truth is, that enough had been sacrificed to noise and show — to the shouts of the multitude, and the yet more agreeable flattery of friendship. The actor had been satiated with applause — the man required some interval, previous to the *greatest* change he had to endure, that he might quite dismiss the "fierce vanities" of the past from his mind, and possess his soul in privacy and in peace.

But the ruling passion made one last effort, and disturbed the tranquillity of his retirement. The mind of Mr. Kemble had a lofty pitch; it could change the kind of its indulgence, without lowering its character. His concluding ambition was to tread

the soil, which his Coriolanus, his Brutus, and his Cato had trodden, and "trace with a stately step "the ruins of the capitol." He therefore visited Rome, which by a religious, in succession to a military despotism, is still the mistress of the world, the ETERNAL CITY. But the air of that capital was found unfavourable; by the advice of the faculty he returned to Lausanne; and all immediate danger seemed to have passed away. He resumed the placid and endearing course of his domestic life — his regular habits, and temperate enjoyments. The scenery of Lausanne is peculiarly striking — the beautiful is around, the sublime is in the distance. The powerful features of nature elevate the conception to the GREATEST of all Beings and the BEST. Piety in Mr. Kemble was a lowly and unpresuming virtue — You gathered it from what he did *not*, rather than what you saw him do. He reverentially abstained from idle use of the sacred name at all times, and indulged his truly rational devotion without dogmatism and with general charity.

In the tenour of this "noiseless course" a sudden check comes upon the system; a few hours of struggle elapse; and he is no more. But fondness for his faithful friend, his monitress, his gentle guide, was the predominant feeling in his breast, and the accents of solicitude as to Mrs. Kemble were the last that faltered from his tongue. What close of life could raise him higher in our estima-

tion than this; what condition form a better termination to a life of hurry and ambition? He had wisely, as well as kindly, given to his brother his share in the theatre; — fully aware of all the difficulties surrounding such property, he had conferred it upon a "younger strength," in the hope, that zeal and industry might realize it into wealth; and that his dear Charles would thus owe every thing in this life, but existence, to himself. He died, fortunately I say for him, at a time, when such a hope might be entertained; and before a strife, equally mischievous and unnecessary, had thrown the whole property into chancery, and by every indulgence of forensic skill, by all the missiles of bill and cross-bill, demurrer and amendment, impeded for months the business of the concern, and exercised the patience of the clearest and most indulgent mind that ever presided in that court.

Mr. Kemble, as to his person, might be said to be majestic by effort rather than habit — he could become so in a moment. His ordinary gait was careless, his look rather kind than penetrating. He did not, except professionally, strive to be considered the noble creature that he was. Perhaps the discrimination of Tacitus as to the appearance of Agricola, was more than slightly characteristic of Kemble. "He was of that make and stature, "which may be said to be graceful, not majestic. "His countenance had not that commanding air "which strikes with awe: a sweetness of expres-

"sion was the prevailing character. You would "have been easily convinced that he was a good "man, and you would have been willing to believe "him a great one."* I have sufficiently, I hope, guarded this application, to Mr. Kemble in *private* life. On the stage, he burst upon you with a dignity, unseen but in *his* person and gesture; and embodied all that imagination, perhaps *alone*, has suggested of ancient manners.

The great author, whom I have just quoted, thus proceeds — "I do not mean to censure the custom "of preserving in brass or marble the shape and "stature of eminent men; but busts and statues, "like their originals, are frail and perishable. The "soul is formed of finer elements, and its inward "form is not to be expressed by the hand of an "artist with unconscious matter." The mind, which informed the expression of Mr. Kemble, may be *truly* conceived from a countenance as variable as the entire circle of the passions — the efforts of modern art too acquire a new though humbler life by the fidelity of the graver. Even in this respect Mr. Kemble was highly fortunate. The skilful admiration of his friend Sir Thomas Lawrence has fixed upon the canvass the melancholy wisdom of his Hamlet, the lofty confidence of his Coriolanus, the intrepid ardour of his Rolla, the awful rumina-

* Decentior quam sublimior fuit: nihil metûs in vultu: gratia oris supererat. Bonum virum facilè crederes, magnum libenter. —Vit. Agric. *Sec.* 44.

tion of his Cato. And many a portrait of the private gentleman, and the scholar, adorn the apartments of his particular friends. From such materials statuary should compose a noble work, that may place him for centuries among the illustrious of our country. Thus, as to our Kemble, we can strengthen the feeble record of tradition, and he need not shrink from the award of time. — Distant ages may estimate the mental and personal graces that adorned him. For ever the objects of an easy reference, his perfect figure and noble countenance may arrest the arts themselves in their debasement, and genius become ashamed of perpetuating vulgar features and forms devoid of character and meaning.

Enough in these volumes has been detailed, to afford the reader a correct idea of the actor and the man. I have shown him, as he would wish *professionally* to be seen, by the side of kindred merit; and, in *private* life, as his character appeared to one, who really loved him. I have thus endeavoured to repay some of the benefits, which I derived from his friendship; and vanity may hope to have extended the fame of a man of genuine worth, and an actor of first-rate excellence. What is beyond this object, I consider, as filling up a group of which HE is the principal figure — as combining an action in which HIS interest was progressive and important. — But though I may flatter myself, that I reflect no unfaithful image of the stage itself during

his life; yet, to exhibit KEMBLE was the grand inducement to my task: how far my wishes may have been seconded by my powers, I must leave to the decision of judgment and candour. I look at the page of Cowper with delight, and admire the solemn propriety with which he has closed *his* task. But although in a work, however slight, I should be ashamed to write without a MORAL purpose, yet on the present occasion I DARE pretend only to the amusement of the PUBLIC.

> "Yes; all is in their hands whose praise I seek;
> Whose frown can disappoint the *proudest* strain,
> Whose approbation prosper *even* MINE."

MR. KEMBLE'S WILL;

EXTRACTED FROM THE REGISTRY OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

The last important act of existence is sometimes a melancholy record of our prejudices, and should, therefore, in charity, be veiled from the general gaze. In the case of Mr. Kemble, *like every other meditated act of his life, it is honourable to his memory.*

The clearness of his intentions, or the intelligence of his friendly solicitor, seems, in his case, to have somewhat unclouded the mystery of legal expression, and it may be read by the unlearned without much difficulty, and even with considerable pleasure.

Among the provisions of Mr. Kemble's *will, there is no lurking vanity, pressing in by idle legacies upon the recollections of the great. All that he had is given exactly where it should be given; and the aids that he had rendered silently during his life are solicitously continued by him during the existence of the parties.*

That the public might have an authentic copy of this interesting document, I requested my proctor to obtain the extract from the Prerogative Registry of Canterbury, and cheerfully paid the serious stamp duty attending the transcript.

This is the last Will and Testament of me, John Philip Kemble, late of Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, and at present residing in Argyle Street, in

the county of Middlesex, Esquire, made the twenty-second day of November, in the year of our Lord One thousand eight hundred and twenty, in manner following; that is to say, I do give, devise, and bequeath unto my most excellent and beloved wife, Priscilla Kemble, her executors, administrators, and assigns, all that annuity or clear yearly rent-charge of One thousand Pounds sterling, which hath been granted, and now stands secured to be paid and payable to me, my executors, administrators, and assigns, for and during the lives of myself and her my said wife Priscilla, and the life of the survivor, in and by certain indentures of lease and release, bearing date respectively the thirty-first day of July and first day of August, in the year One thousand eight hundred and seventeen, and made between John George Lambton, of Lambton, in the county of Durham, Esquire, of the first part, myself of the second part, and John Griffiths, of the city of Durham, gentleman, (a trustee on my part) of the third part; and in and by a warrant of attorney, bearing even date with the said indenture of release, under the hand and seal of the said John George Lambton, for confessing judgment against him at my suit for the sum of Twenty thousand Pounds sterling and costs: And also in and by an indenture bearing even date with the said indenture of release, and made between the said John George Lambton of the first part, myself of the second part, and John Gregson, of the said city of Durham, gentleman, of the third part; whereby the said John Gregson is appointed receiver of the rents and profits of the hereditaments and premises comprised in the said indentures of lease and release, to act therein in case the said yearly rent charge should not be paid as therein mentioned: And all my estate, right, title, and interest, trust, property, possession, claim, and demand whatsoever, of, in, and to the said yearly rent charge, and all powers and

remedies for recovery thereof, together with the said several Indentures of lease and release and appointment: And the said warrant of attorney and judgment to be entered up thereupon, and all other securities for the same rent charge, to have, hold, receive, and take the said yearly rent charge of One thousand Pounds and premises, unto and by my said wife Priscilla Kemble, her executors, administrators, and assigns, to and for her and their own use and benefit absolutely. I do give and bequeath unto my said wife Priscilla all my household goods and furniture, books, plate, linen, woollen, and china, to and for her own use absolutely. I give and bequeath unto my sister Mrs. Ann Hatton, of the town of Swansea, in the county of Glamorgan, and her assigns, for and during her life, one clear annuity or yearly sum of Sixty Pounds sterling. And unto my sister Mrs. Jane Mason, of Edinburgh, and her assigns, for and during her life, one clear annuity or yearly sum of Twenty Pounds sterling. And I do direct that both the said annuities of sixty pounds and twenty pounds, whilst respectively subsisting, shall be punctually paid out of the residue of my personal estate, free and clear of and from the legacy or annuity tax or duty for the time being, and all other taxes, duties, and deductions whatsoever, by four equal quarterly payments, on the twenty-fifth day of March, the twenty-fourth day of June, the twenty-ninth day of September, and the twenty-fifth day of December, in every year; the first quarterly payment thereof respectively to be made on such of those days as shall next happen after my decease, and a proportional part of each annuity to be paid to the executors or administrators of each annuitant up to the day of her decease. And as to, for, and concerning all other my goods, chattels, stocks, funds, and monies, due and owing unto me, and other monies and securities for money, debts, and all other my personal estate

whatsoever and wheresoever, not hereinbefore by me given or otherwise disposed of, (subject, however, in the first place to the payment of my just debts and funeral expences, the charges of proving and executing this my Will, and to such legacies as I may give by any codicil or codicils hereto,) I do give and bequeath the same and every part thereof respectively unto my said dear wife Priscilla Kemble and my dear brother Charles Kemble, Esquire, upon trust, that they shall and do, as soon as conveniently may be after my decease, sell and convert into money all such parts thereof as shall not consist of money, or securities for money, and shall and do call in and receive and collect all such parts thereof as consist of money and securities for money, and debts owing unto me; and shall and do, with all convenient speed thereupon, lay out and invest the monies arising by the sale and conversion into money of such part of the residue of my said personal estate, as shall not consist of money, or securities for money, and the monies which shall be so called in. And all other the said residue of my personal estate, after and subject as aforesaid, in the purchase, from time to time, of Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, in the names of them my said wife and brother, and of two other proper persons to be mutually chosen by them; and my Will is, and I do hereby direct, that they my said wife and brother, and such two persons so to be chosen, and the survivors and survivor of them, his executors and administrators, shall and do stand and be possessed of and interested in the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities so to be purchased, in trust, out of the interest or dividends thereof to pay the said two life annuities, while respectively subsisting, as hereinbefore directed; and to pay unto or permit or authorise my said wife Priscilla, and her assigns, to receive all the surplus or remainder of the said interest or dividends, for and during

her life, to and for her and their own use and benefit. And from and immediately after her decease, upon trust, to sell and transfer so much of the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, as, after payment of brokerage on such sale, shall produce the clear sum of Four thousand Pounds sterling, and do pay the same sum unto such person or persons, and in such shares and proportions as she my said wife shall, in and by her last Will and Testament, to be duly signed and published by her in the presence of and to be attested by two credible witnesses, shall direct or appoint, or give and bequeath the said sum of four thousand pounds: And subject to such direction or appointment, gift or bequest, if any shall be so made as aforesaid, and also subject to the payment of the said two life annuities, while respectively subsisting, I do give and bequeath the remainder or the whole of the said Bank Three Pounds per cent. Annuities, as the case may be, unto my said brother Charles Kemble, his executors, administrators, and assigns, to and for his and their use and benefit; and do direct such Bank Annuities to be transferred unto him or them accordingly, freed and discharged of and from all other trusts then as to the payment of the said two life annuities while respectively subsisting. And I do hereby nominate and appoint my said wife Priscilla Kemble and my said brother Charles Kemble, to be EXECUTRIX and EXECUTOR of this my Will: Provided always, and I do hereby further declare my Will to be, that it shall and may be lawful to and for my said Trustees and Executors acting under this my Will, respectively, and their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, by and out of all or any of the monies which, by virtue of this my Will or any of the trusts herein declared, shall come to their or any of their hands, to deduct, and retain to, and reimburse them-

selves respectively; and also to allow to their respective co-trustee and executor, their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, all such costs, charges, damages, and expences as they respectively shall or may sustain, incur, or be put unto, in or about the execution of the several, trusts hereby in them respectively reposed, or any of them, or of this my Will. And also that the said trustees and executors respectively, their respective heirs, executors, and administrators, shall be charged and chargeable only, each and every of them, for and with his, her, and their respective receipts, payments, acts, and wilful defaults, and not otherwise; and shall not be charged or chargeable with or for any sum or sums of money, other than such as shall actually come to their respective hands by virtue of this my Will, the joining in receipts for form's sake notwithstanding. And that no trustee of this my Will, paying or consenting to the payment of money to a co-trustee thereof, with a bonâ fide intent to accelerate the performance of the trusts thereof, shall be responsible for the conduct or misconduct of the trustee receiving the same, nor be answerable for his or her application or misapplication of such money; nor shall any such trustees be charged or chargeable with or for any loss or damage which shall or may happen, in or about the execution of the several trusts hereby in them respectively reposed, or of this my Will, without their respective wilful default. And lastly, hereby revoking all former and other Wills and Codicils by me at any time heretofore made, I do declare this to be my last Will and Testament. In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and I have executed, or intend to execute, a duplicate hereof in like manner, the day and year first before written.

J. P. KEMBLE.

The Writing contained in this sheet of paper was signed by the said John Philip Kemble, the Testator, and by him published as and for, and declared to be his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us, who, at his request, in his presence, and that of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses to such signing and publishing.

ALEXANDER MURRAY, of Symond's Inn.
WILLIAM WOODHOUSE, } Clerks to Mr. Murray.
HENRY BURGH, }

PROVED at LONDON, 26th April, 1823, before the Worshipful Jesse Addams, Doctor of Laws and Surrogate, by the oaths of Priscilla Kemble, Widow, the relict, and Charles Kemble, Esquire, the brother, the Executors, to whom Administration was granted, being first sworn duly to administer.

NATHANIEL GOSTLIND, }
R. C. CRESSWELL, } Deputy Registers.
TER. JENNER, }

THE END.

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Memoirs of the life of
John Philip Kemble, esq.

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